

# Confronting Canadian Migration History



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# INTRODUCTION

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DANIEL ROSS

This collection originated in fall 2015, as the question of what the Canadian government could or should do to help the hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the war in Syria became a federal election issue.<sup>1</sup> As the major parties defined their positions, differing interpretations of Canada's migration history emerged. The Liberal and New Democratic Parties used examples of past refugee movements—whether the arrival of Irish famine boats in the 1840s or the settlement of Indochinese refugees in 1979-80—to forefront compassion and humanitarianism as core Canadian values. The Conservative Party under Stephen Harper rejected those parallels, arguing that opening Canada's borders had never solved international crises, and that the first priority of the government was to protect the existing Canadian population, in this case from the danger of Islamist terrorism among the majority-Muslim Syrians. Starting with a refugee theme week in early September 2015, *ActiveHistory.ca* reached out to Canadian migration history scholars in an effort to bring an engaged historical perspective to these ongoing debates.

In 2019 that perspective seems more vital than ever. The election of Donald Trump to the American presidency in 2016 is part of larger political shift that has legitimized racism and nativism in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Conflicts, persecution, and environmental disasters have created 70 million displaced people, including 25 million refugees, worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Lies, mythologies, and

stereotypes about migrants circulating on social media and in political discourse obscure the social realities of present and past migration movements and misdirect public policy debates. It is important now, as it was in 2015, to confront Canadian migration history in the public sphere. By that I mean two things. First, to engage with the history of population movements into, through, and from this territory, and their importance for our history as a multiethnic settler society. This has been one of the central projects of migration historians in Canada in recent decades.<sup>3</sup> Second, to make and maintain a place for that historical knowledge in contemporary discussions of migration, and in doing so confront the present with the past. That latter goal is at the heart of this collection, which assembles in one volume fifteen texts published on *ActiveHistory.ca* over the last four years.

The essays published here are organized in three thematic sections, on refugees, migration experiences and representations, and nativism. These topics, and particularly the related questions of increased refugee migrations and of the new nativism, are among the most pressing in today's migration debates. However, the essays in this volume also speak to one another in a range of other ways. Four were part of the original 2015 blog series addressing political responses to the Syrian refugee crisis. While not rejecting the narrative of Canada as refuge deployed by centre-left politicians, Stephanie Bangarth seeks to historicize it, emphasizing that past public debates and policy discussions over refugee movements in Canada were shaped as much by geopolitical context, racial bias, and economic self-interest as by humanitarian ideals. Similarly, Benjamin Hoy uses the case of a group of Cree who moved to the United States following the 1885 Rebellion to explore what it might mean to think of displaced Indigenous peoples as refugees, and Canada as a producer of refugee movements. Meanwhile, posts by Sarah Carter and Franca Iacovetta with Karen Dubinsky target the federal Conservative party's efforts to stoke fear and win votes by depicting Syrians as unassimilable, dangerous Others. Carter's piece plays on Stephen Harper's much-debated distinction between newcomers and "old-stock Canadians," arguing that a century of Syrian presence in Canada qualifies them for the latter category.<sup>4</sup> For



Iacovetta and Dubinsky, Conservative calls to ban the niqab are not just cynical electioneering, but the latest in “a long line of immigrant women whom this country has feared or pitied, but always stereotyped”.

Three of the pieces in this collection were written to address questions of commemoration and collective remembering. Jan Raska’s piece on the fiftieth anniversary of the Prague Spring asks what the acceptance of thousands of highly-qualified Czech refugees might tell us about evolving bureaucratic notions of desirable and undesirable immigrants. In the context of a series of white supremacist rallies in major North American cities, Laura Ishiguro and Laura Madokoro discuss Vancouver’s 1907 anti-Asian riots as an example of the long, at times violent history of the idea of “white Canada.” Finally, after the federal government’s apology for refusing entry to the hundreds of Jewish refugees aboard the *MS St. Louis* on the eve of the Second World War, Andrea Eidingger and Laura Madokoro reflect on the gulf between that symbolic act and real action to combat historical injustices in Canada today.

Group identities of all kinds rely on history to support their assertions of separateness, and to justify the work of inclusion and exclusion that defines their limits. We can watch this process unfold today in the resurgence of nativism and exclusionary nationalism in North America and Europe. In this collection’s final section, devoted to that subject, both David Atkinson and Aitana Guia explore how distortions of the past are mobilized to support contemporary nativist discourses, whether the setting is a British Columbia purportedly threatened by “white erasure,” or European countries where the populist Right is making the consumption of pork a condition of belonging. In their contributions, Ryan McKenney and Ben Bryce, writing about the long history of the mosaic as a metaphor for Canadian society, and Michael Akladios, discussing the Levantine origins of Arab-Canadian foodscapes, highlight other ways in which past migrations are present in our everyday cultural practices and our sense of ourselves.

One of the great strengths of the texts in this book is that they are rooted in rigorous historical research. They are all examples of scholars speaking as experts in their particular areas of inquiry, and

that, I would argue, makes their contributions particularly unique and useful. While all of our authors speak from this position, four of the essays make sources or the research process a key area of focus. Sonya de Laat in her piece on refugee photography in post-WWI Europe provides us with a fascinating discussion of how historical and contemporary images shape our understanding of migration movements. Edward Dunsworth uses his research on the history of migrant farmwork to argue that its human costs—in this case the loss of life in automobile collisions—are built into the organization of the industry. In her essay, Laura Madokoro gives us a report from the archive on how the use of x-rays fit into the “discriminatory science of immigration” deployed by the federal government in the Cold War era. Finally, in his second contribution, Michael Akla-dios gives us a picture of a migration historian who cannot help but interweave past and present in his research. His informal interviews with Egyptian Uber drivers give us a rich portrait of the hows and whys of migration in our globalized world.

This volume, like all of Active History’s activities over the past decade, would not have been possible without the support of a network of contributors and allies across the country. The essays in this collection speak to the broad range of research being done in Canadian migration history; they also highlight the commitment of their authors to an engaged, public-facing scholarly practice. Read together, we believe they offer a much-needed historical perspective on contemporary Canadian debates around immigration and refuge, questions that cut to the heart of who we are as a society.

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## Notes

1. Studies of the Syrian refugee question before, during, and after the 2015 election have begun to appear. See for example Rebecca Wallace, “Contextualizing the Crisis: The Framing of Syrian Refugees in Canadian Print Media,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 51:2 (2018), 207–31.

2. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHRC) figures as of June 2018. See UNHRC, *Statistical Yearbooks—Facts at a Glance 2018* published June 2018 at <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

3. For an overview of this varied historiography, see the collaborative *Canadian*

*Immigration History Syllabus*, published in January 2019 at <http://activehistory.ca/2019/01/immigrationsyllabus/>.

4. Mark Gollom, "Stephen Harper's 'old-stock Canadians': Politics of division or simple slip?" *CBC News*, Sep. 19, 2015. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/old-stock-canadians-stephen-harper-identity-politics-1.3234386>.



PART I.

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**REFUGEE MIGRATIONS**

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## CHAPTER 1.

# CANADA'S COMPLICATED HISTORY OF REFUGEE RECEPTION

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STEPHANIE BANGARTH

Ever since the war, efforts have been made by groups and individuals to get refugees into Canada but we have fought all along to protect ourselves against the admission of such stateless persons without passports, for the reason that coming out of the maelstrom of war, some of them are liable to go on the rocks and when they become public charges, we have to keep them for the balance of their lives.

F.C. Blair, Director, Immigration Branch, 1938.

[A]s human beings we should do our best to provide as much sanctuary as we can for those people who can get away. I say we should do that because these people are human and deserve that consideration, and because we are human and ought to act in that way.

Stanley Knowles, MP, House of Commons, 9 July 1943.

Separated by a mere five years, these two statements reveal much about the historic contradictions of the Canadian approach in dealing with refugee crises. In fact, remove the dates and these statements would not seem out of place in the current Canadian divide over the global refugee crisis in which there are more than 60 million people fleeing war, persecution, and danger. This is a number that surpasses the amount of displaced persons at the end of the Second World War, when my father and my grandparents fled Hun-

gary by train and horse-led wagons to come to Canada in April of 1951, but not before spending six years stateless in Austria. They were among the more than 120,000 refugees who made their way to Canada between 1947 and 1953, thanks to contract labour schemes or government, family or church group sponsorships. Make no mistake, the selection criteria were guided by racial and political bias, along with a heavy dose of economic self-interest.



*Hungarian Refugees arrive in Canada, 1957. Archives of Ontario, F1405-19-60, SR.14500.*

Of all the elements of Canada's immigration policy, those relating to the admission of refugees have been the most controversial and the most criticized. But for much of Canadian immigration history, neither politicians nor public officials made any distinction between immigrants and refugees. It was not until the passage of the 1976 *Immigration Act* that refugees constituted an admissible class for resettlement. Until that time, special refugee admission schemes were made possible only with the passage of orders-in-council



which suspended normal immigration regulations and permitted relaxed criteria for screening.

Fast forward to 2015 and a United Nations report reveals that Canada is at the bottom of a top-15 list of industrialized receiving countries, with 13,500 claims reported in 2014. In comparison, Sweden, a small Nordic country with 9.6 million people and a quarter of Canada's population, admitted 75,100 refugees last year. In January the Conservatives pledged to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees over a period of three years, of which Immigration Minister Chris Alexander reported 2,500 are now in Canada. In a crass display of politicking last month, the Conservatives promised to increase this number by an additional 10,000 over four years if they are re-elected in October. Sadly, this is a meaningless number, amidst an increasingly shameful Canadian response to ongoing refugee crises over the last 15 years.

We weren't always so unwelcoming. Nor have we offered an open door since the end of World War II. I would argue that the reputation we have (or had) as a world leader in protecting refugees is due largely to the concerned Canadians who have called on our political leaders to 'do more'. The UNHCR recognized this when it awarded the Canadian people the Nansen Medal in 1986.

In 1956 it was the Canadian people, acting in concert with humanitarian and voluntary agencies (the Canadian Red Cross in particular), who called on the government of Louis St. Laurent to take in Hungarians fleeing the violent Soviet repression of the Hungarian revolution. In response to significant public pressure, Canadian immigration officials reinforced the number of immigration officers at the Canadian Embassy in Vienna, loosened the normal requirements concerning proper travel documentation, medical exams and security clearances, and enlisted commercial airplanes to transport the refugees out of Austria. The Canadian government increased monetary aid to the CRC by emphasizing that substantial emergency relief would serve as a replacement for military intervention. The effort produced impressive results: by the end of 1957, more than 37,000 Hungarians had been accepted into Canada. This was done despite domestic economic concerns, including a rising

unemployment rate. But the reception of the Hungarian refugees played well into the Cold War rhetoric of the time.

Thanks to this wellspring of Canadian support, my great aunt and uncle came to Canada in January of 1957, following a harrowing crossing over the Hungarian-Austrian border. It was actually my great uncle's second try; he was arrested the first time and sent to a Soviet work camp. His friend wasn't so lucky; he was shot by a Russian border guard. They are so thankful to this day for the chance to live in Canada. In fact, visit any *Magyarhaz* (Hungarian Hall) in Canada and you will likely find events commemorating the reception of the '56ers, and quite possibly a photo of J. L. Pickersgill, the Minister of Immigration at the time, who actually travelled to the refugee camps to personally assess the situation.

Still, the Hungarian refugee crisis is telling of the limits of what individuals can do in an international system founded on the primacy of the nation-state. While the response of Canadians was an important catalyst for mobilizing action around the cause of refugee rights, the crisis had the unanticipated effect of heightening expectations to what proved to be unrealistic levels. For some groups, the Hungarian crisis was not a "one-off", but rather the standard to which future national responses to humanitarian crises should aspire. Indeed, the success of the Hungarian resettlement program for Canada served as a convenient precedent when in subsequent years, individuals and groups urged the government to act on other refugee crises.

While the Hungarian refugees were fleeing a Communist state and welcomed as democratic refugees, Chilean refugees fleeing a fascist state were viewed with suspicion. In 1973 over 7,000 Chilean and other Latin American refugees were admitted to Canada after the violent overthrow of Salvador Allende's democratically elected Socialist-Communist government. Chilean and non-Chilean supporters of the old regime then fled the oppression directed against them by Chile's new military ruler, General Pinochet, in the wake of the coup. Although Canada took the refugees in, it did so grudgingly—at least initially. Despite pressure from Amnesty International, church, labour, and Latino groups, the government was slow to react, not wanting to antagonize Chile's new administration or

the United States, which had deplored Chile's slide into economic chaos under Allende. Many in the Pierre Trudeau government painted the Chilean refugees as subversives and dangerous to Canada. This was certainly out of step with the views of the Canadian population, many of whom were urging the government, by way of various organizations, to accept the refugees as they had done during past crises. The government was also out of step with the efforts of other nations, including Holland and Sweden, who treated the Chilean refugees outside the normal flow of immigrants. Only after considerable outcry from various civil society groups did the situation change.

But not all Canadians were of the same mind. The January 14, 1974 edition of the *Toronto Star* carried a photo of a small group of demonstrators parading in front of the Walker House Hotel, where a group of recently arrived Chileans were being temporarily housed. Carrying placards bearing statements such as "Death to the Red Pest", "No More Marxists – FLQ was enough", and "Keep Marxist Gangsters Out of Canada", they claimed to be "objecting to Canadian tax money being spent on 'riff raff'".

The slow response in the Chilean case led many to become increasingly suspicious of Ottawa's commitment to refugees. As several scholars of Canadian immigration and refugee policy have noted, the response to the crisis helped to foster the perception that the federal government was far more willing to accommodate refugees fleeing communist regimes on the left than those escaping fascist regimes on the right. This was made abundantly clear by the late 1970s, as Canada's response to the "boat people" of Vietnam fleeing a leftist government was in significantly marked contrast to that which was extended, and continued to be extended to victims of right-wing regimes such as that in Chile.



Protest against Chilean refugees, Toronto. Harold Barkley/Toronto Star, 1974. Toronto Public Library, tspa\_0012853f.

By mid-1979, nearly 1.5 million refugees had fled their homes in Southeast Asia. In June of 1979, the Canadian government announced that 60,000 Indochinese refugees would be resettled by the end of 1980. Thousands of Canadians came forward to welcome refugees, giving a dramatic launch to the new Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. Popular pressure forced the government to adjust upwards its initial commitment to resettling the refugees. For the years 1978-81, refugees made up 25% of all immigrants to Canada.

In the summer of 1999, several hundred undocumented Fujianese migrants (Chinese from Fujian province) arrived on Canada's west coast, precipitating what many in the news media described as an immigration and refugee "crisis". News coverage of these events precipitated a process of collective hand-wringing and teeth-gnash-

ing, the result of which was that the refugees were portrayed as an embodiment of danger, a threat to the physical, moral and political security and well-being of the nation.

The alarmist reaction of the Canadian government, and Canadians, to the arrival of a vessel called the *MV Sun Sea* carrying Tamil refugee claimants to the West Coast in October of 2010 is consistent with our mixed history. Public Safety Minister Vic Toews warned that this was a test boat, that there would be more boat loads of Tamils arriving to overwhelm the Canadian refugee system, that the passengers might include Tamil Tigers bent on infiltrating Canada, and the whole enterprise was being driven by criminal smugglers. In reality, there were 492 claimants on the vessel, which was about 1.5% of the nearly 34,000 refugee claims Canada received that year. In response to the crisis, Toews declared that Canada should “get tough”, incarcerate all of the passengers, and possibly seek new laws to fend off this latest threat to Canada. As a result the federal government passed Bill C-31, known as the *Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act*. To say that this piece of legislation has been soundly rejected by a variety of civil society groups would be an understatement.

So here are some numbers, again: in 1956 we took in some 37,000 Hungarian refugees. In 1968 we took in 10,000 Czechoslovakian refugees in the aftermath of the Prague Spring. In 1972, 8,000 Ugandan Asians were welcomed to Canada, and then about 60,000 Indochinese ‘boat people’ were also welcomed as refugees. In the 1990s over 11,000 refugees from the breakup of Yugoslavia made their way from Bosnia and Kosovo to Canada. And in the past decade nearly 14,000 people fleeing the ongoing civil war in Colombia have come to Canada. How many refugees is the right number? What is the right number? There’s no right answer, of course. Let’s face it: our record is mixed, even as most Canadians seem to favour asylum provision. No one should forget that in 1930s Canada, “none [was] too many” for Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany.

More recently we have seen cuts to refugee health care, mandatory detention for “irregular” arrivals (including children), and government money spent on billboards in Hungary to stem the tide of Roma asylum seekers to Canada. This is what passes for bold inter-

vention these days. Our history with respect to refugee reception may be complicated, but over the last 10 years it has risked becoming contemptible – again.

## CHAPTER 2.

# USING OLD PHOTOGRAPHS TO GAIN NEW PERSPECTIVES ON REFUGEES, PAST AND PRESENT

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SONYA DE LAAT

In the summer of 2018 an unprecedented number of people claiming to be refugees crossed into Canada at unofficial border points. Many Canadians learned of these events through photographs and other visual media circulating through the press. Responding to such images, public reaction in Canada has been mixed. While some people support actions aimed at helping these families and individuals, others have sensationalized the situation by labelling it a “crisis” and calling border-crossers “illegals” or “queue jumpers.”

It is not the photographs on their own that have contributed to this ambivalence, since “photographs are mute”. Photographs take their meaning from the words around them: captions, news anchor statements, accompanying articles, or even the “narrative templates in our own minds.”<sup>1</sup> Responses such as those that surfaced this summer are not new. Indeed, they are reflective of a historical pattern of response towards refugees over the past century. Looking at one set of photographs from that era can give us another perspective on current debates and remind us of the powerful role photography plays in mediating social relations.

There is a little-known collection of photographs made by Lewis Hine for the American Red Cross (ARC) at the tail end and imme-

diately following the Great War. The ARC hired Hine because of his reputation as America's foremost photographer of social reform issues. Hine had trained as a sociologist and an educator. He was not a journalist, but rather a social reformer whose main medium of advocacy was the camera. By the mid-1910s, Hine had developed a reputation as "the most extensive and successful photographer of social welfare work in [America]."<sup>2</sup> During the First World War, his positive portrayals of refugees served the ARC well in their development as America's foremost relief agency .



Image 1. "Refugees on railroad track en route to Gradletza, Serbia." Lewis Hine, 1919. (GCAH-79296). (These handwritten captions are in Hine's own hand)

This dive into the ARC and Lewis Hine archives is meant to contribute to reflections on new directions for humanitarian photography that take into consideration historical legacies of particular practices around the use of photography, and to reflect on the role of photography in influencing or changing peoples' perceptions. It's in this sense that Hine's photographs give insight into the cycles of ris-



ing and falling sympathy towards refugees that have occurred over the past century and the role of the mobilization of photography therein.

A group of people “that appeared in the public arena virtually overnight,”<sup>3</sup> the term “refugee” was resurrected during the Great War’s early years, expanding from its original meaning of religious persecution to encompass all people fleeing persecution and seeking safety. Representing them as “hapless wartime victims”, Hine’s photographs allowed Europe’s refugees to stake a claim on American sentiments, however briefly. Indeed, the ARC’s sympathetic portrayal of refugees during the height of the war had already, by 1918, become a counter-narrative to debate and anxiety about refugees.

After the war, Hine continued to photograph refugees for the ARC’s Special Survey of reconstruction needs. His pictures and captions in many ways defined and specified the condition of being a refugee, or “refugeedom.”<sup>4</sup> The content and themes in Hine’s refugee-labeled photographs contain elements that are repeated in pictures of refugees today. He frequently pictured family groups, with children, burdened under the weight of their worldly possessions, as they travelled cross-country by foot along dusty or muddy roadways, or along the rail lines (see Image 1).

Perseverance, ingenuity, capacity to labour, and drive despite loss were all themes Hine built into his images, and they were themes an American audience could relate to. All the while he deliberately focused on expressions of hope, or at least positive qualities of resilience and resourcefulness (see Image 2). I interpret what Hine was doing as working along the lines of philosopher Richard Rorty’s concept of “sentimental education,” where narratives (in the captions) and representations (in the pictures) have the potential “to expand the reference of terms ‘our kind of people’ and ‘people like us’” to include people who might otherwise be considered ‘other’ or ‘them’.<sup>5</sup>

Despite all this, in the early months of post-war peace, refugees—foundational to ARC reputation and practice—were being outmaneuvered by a narrowing of humanitarian idealism as the wartime sense of international humanitarianism as a patriotic duty was being replaced by an insular nationalistic fervor. The

visual framing and displacement of refugees from the ARC's publications forms part of an ongoing pattern of the rise and fall of sentiments towards refugees that would continue through the century to today.

Visual culture scholars will often base much of their analysis on the ways in which photographs have been used or the conditions in which pictures develop; what Elizabeth Edwards has termed their "social life".<sup>6</sup> But Hine's Special Survey pictures have almost no "social life" to speak of. Of the approximately 1000 photographs he made in Italy, Serbia, Greece, and Belgium between November 1918 and April 1919, the ARC would publish fewer than a handful.



Image 2 "Tent used by Jewish people, fire refugees, very unsanitary. Salonika, Greece." Lewis Hine, 1919. (GCAH-79375)

That's why I propose instead to build on Ariella Azoulay's idea of "watching" his photographs to reconstruct what little social life they had.<sup>7</sup> Instead of simply looking at photographs, watching a picture is fundamentally an act of historical thinking. "Watching" entails dimensions of time and movement that need to be re-inscribed in the interpretation of the still photographic image. This action, according to Azoulay, is an intentional act of viewing of the photograph that "reconstructs the photographic situation and allows a reading of the injury [or I would say, affect or condition] inflicted

on others [as] a civic skill, not an exercise in aesthetic appreciation". "Watching" the photographs in Azoulay's sense can return to us clues as to Hine's intentions and perspectives; it also enables a richer glimpse into refugeedom.

Approaching photographs in the manner I propose is essential to foster a deeper understanding of the condition and experience of being a refugee. In particular, I embrace John Berger's idea that "a radial system has to be constructed around the photograph so that it may be seen in terms which are simultaneously personal, political, economic, dramatic, everyday and historic".<sup>8</sup> Here, I'm demonstrating the way photographs "continue to exist in time, instead of being arrested moments" by building a "radial system" that explores the historical and social context of the arena of actors, actions that existed and continue to exist beyond the picture's frame as photography plays an ever greater role in mediating perceptions.

"Watching"—rather than looking—at photographs, also unravels what Azoulay has termed "potential histories," which opens the mind to trajectories that might have happened had mechanisms of control been different or nonexistent. Exploring potential histories is an act of challenging official memory and dominant histories that obscure or deny spectators' ability to judge situations from multiple perspectives, let alone recognize their being implicated (or even complicit) in them.

Historical thinking and exploring the potential histories in archival photographs can lead to questioning such as:

- What discursive and imaginary opportunities emerge when comparing historical and contemporary photographs of refugeedom? What happens to the discourse once that civil space is opened up?
- What might have happened had the ARC published a large photo-spread of post-war refugee and reconstruction needs, from that Special Survey, and framed them as needs that Americans were ideally positioned to respond to? How might that have impacted political policies such as the 1924 *Johnson-Reid Act* which emerged in response to First World

## War refugees seeking settlement in North America?

- Given that Hine ascribed the term “refugee” in his captions to only certain types of people, while calling others “beggars” or “nomads”, what might this reveal in terms of histories of limits to humanitarian imagination or the politics of naming today?
- How might reflection on the pattern of visual depictions of refugees—the visual culture of refugeedom—over the past century impact considerations of moral responsibilities and social obligations forged before or that extend beyond nationalism, or the increasing social constructions of sedentary bias or nativism in policy changes over the past century?

I’m not sure yet what such a new humanitarian/historical photography might look like, where these lines of questioning may lead, but in a moment in which there are approximately 68.5 million forcibly displaced people, of which some 25.4 million are refugees according to the UNHCR definition, historical perspective can open to new lines of *inquiry* or different *ways of seeing* the situation (in the words of John Berger).<sup>9</sup> I look forward to seeing the possibilities that unfold and what implications on public discourse about refugees it may have.

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### Notes

1. A. Freund, A. Thomson, *Image and Memory: Oral History and Photography* (London: Palgrave, 2011), 5.
2. N. Rosenblum, A. Trachtenberg, W. Rosenblum, *America and Lewis Hine: Photographs, 1904-1940* (New York: Aperture, 1977), 142.
3. P. Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 197.
4. P. Gatrell, *Refugees. 1914-1918-Online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, October 8, 2014.
5. R. Rorty, “Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality,” in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 167–185.
6. E. Edwards, “Objects of affect: Photography beyond the image,” *Annual Review of*

*Anthropology*, 41 (2012): 221–234.

7. A. Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone, 2008).

8. J. Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, (New York: Aperture, 2013 [1978]), 60.

9. J. Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 57.

## CHAPTER 3.

### WHEN TO SPEAK, WHEN TO ACT: REFLECTIONS ON THE RECENT MS ST. LOUIS APOLOGY

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ANDREA EIDINGER AND LAURA MADOKORO

On 7 November 2018, Justin Trudeau stood up in the House of Commons and issued a formal apology to the families of passengers of the *MS St. Louis* as well as the entire Jewish Canadian community for the Canadian government's decision to refuse to allow the ship to dock in 1939. As historians with expertise in the history of immigration and Jewish Canada, both of us paid close attention to the apology. While we were pleased that to see the Prime Minister drew attention to this shameful event in our history and acknowledged the long history of antisemitism in this country, we felt that it ultimately rang hollow.

While the Prime Minister vowed to fight antisemitism and to learn from the past, the speech was short on specific details. As Trudeau noted in his apology, even today Canadian Jews are the most frequent target of hate crimes in this country, at seventeen percent. In the wake of the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in October 2018, Christine Chevalier-Caron and Philippe Néméh-Nombré published a piece on *HistoireEngagée.ca*, demonstrating how antisemitism is normalized in Quebec and Canada, as well as the prevailing belief that Canada was (and is) a place of refuge for those in need.<sup>1</sup>

In our minds the contradiction is striking and not easily dismissed. How is it that antisemitism can be a quotidian part of life in Canada while the country is also associated with being a place of refuge? How did this fundamental contradiction come to be and what are the implications for the present and future? Part of the answer lies in the ease with which politicians can speak in morally righteous terms when apologizing for historical wrongs and the gulf that often exists between the symbolism of their words, their actions, and the lived experience of those most affected by the subject and substance of their apologies.



*MS St. Louis in Havana, 1938. National Archives and Records Administration, 306-NT-648-E-5.*

We have seen the power of words and actions before, both domestically and on the international stage. While today Canada likes to think of itself as a bastion of human rights, this is not reflective of historical or contemporary reality. Even though the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted in part by Canadian legal scholar, John Peters Humphrey, the Canadian government abstained when it came up for approval at the committee stage. Humphrey himself expressed shock, later writing

Although I knew that the international promotion of human rights had no priority in Canadian foreign policy, it had never occurred to me that the government would carry its indifference to the point of abstaining in such an important vote.

The government's reservations stemmed in large part due to the fact that, while the Declaration was not binding, it fundamentally conflicted with their restrictive immigration policies, the *Indian Act*, and the treatment of Japanese Canadians (who still did not have freedom of movement at the time of this debate). In 1948, the Canadian delegation, under Lester B. Pearson, only voted in favour of the charter once it became clear they would be part of an "undesirable" group of countries, like South Africa and the Soviet Union.

Likewise, Canada's opposition to the apartheid regime that was established in South Africa after 1948 was slow in emerging, as leaders such as Lester B. Pearson insisted that although the international community via the United Nations could serve as a "town hall" of sorts, it was inappropriate for any government to intervene in the sovereign affairs of another. In 1961, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker was widely applauded for his stance at the Commonwealth Ministers' Meeting in which he sided with Prime Minister Nehru of India, and others, in advancing a racial equality clause (later abandoned) to establish a principle of inclusive in the "new Commonwealth". As historian Asa McKercher has detailed, this celebrated stance was more complicated than previous narratives have suggested, in part because Diefenbaker himself was wary of encroaching too much in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state. The reason for his caution? Diefenbaker knew that Canada's racist immigration policies and its treatment of Indigenous peoples would not hold up to international scrutiny. *Macleans*' magazine confirmed this view, noting that Canada's "shabby record" meant that it couldn't really take the lead on South Africa. Diefenbaker's public statements were moderated by lived realities.

In 1984, when Prime Minister Brian Mulroney took up the anti-apartheid cause upon his election to office, the relationship between rhetoric and practice was closer; principled rhetoric was matched with sanctions and increased aid to civil society and the alternative press in South Africa. Where the Canadian position was weakest,



however, was in the federal government's efforts to promote a vision of principled racial equality abroad while Indigenous peoples in Canada continued to face racism and structural discrimination. In 1987, as the anti-apartheid campaign gained momentum, Chief Louis Stevenson of the Peguis First Nation in Manitoba invited the South African High Commissioner to Canada, Glen Babb, to tour the conditions of his impoverished reserve. Stevenson was determined to shame the Mulroney government into acting with regard to the conditions of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

More recently we have seen the same disconnect between words and actions with respect to the federal government's relationship with Indigenous peoples and communities. It has now been over ten years since Stephen Harper stood in the House of Commons and apologized to the residential school students and their families. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and Calls to Action were released in 2015. But as, Ian Mosby has recently shown, only eight (out of ninety-four) have been completed in the last three years.<sup>2</sup>

This history of principled rhetoric, constrained and complicated by lived experiences, can help us think through some of the implications of the apology offered by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the Jewish community in Canada. In particular, the apology serves as a reminder of how words should be met with substantive actions and concrete change.

In this case, Trudeau's apology points to the need for funding for more historical research on and investigations into hate crimes (both great and seemingly mundane), as well as more investment in education at all levels about the history of racial discrimination in this country. This funding is vital. It is due in large part to the work of historians such as Irving Abella and Harold Troper and the research that came out of the Truth and Reconciliation that we now understand much more about the full extent of historical injustices, as well as their contemporary manifestations. As all of this research has shown, historical injustices are not simply "dark chapters." They are woven into the very fabric of Canadian society and impact the lives of Canadians of all backgrounds to this day.

We must also ask difficult questions about the intended audience

and purpose of apologies. Redress for Japanese Canadians included the establishment of community funds for education, leading to the creation of the Nikkei National Museum and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to expressly focus on education. Literally, the idea was that never again should the rights of Canadian citizens be violated in such an egregious manner. Knowledge was seen as a key vehicle for ensuring this was the case.

The lack of concrete actions in more recent apologies points to the dangers of words alone. When apologies are not accompanied by meaningful change, they serve only to reinforce nation-building and erase difference, using the suffering of one group of people to reinforce mainstream historical narratives about progress. Somehow, there doesn't seem to be the conceptual space to connect a historical wrong with injustices in the present. The past must be bad so that the present can be good.

In the closing passages of the apology, the prime minister stated:

Too many people – of all faiths, from all countries – face persecution. Their lives are threatened simply because of how they pray, what they wear or the last name they bear. They are forced to flee their homes and embark upon perilous journeys in search of safety and a future. This is the world we all live in and this is therefore our collective responsibility.

Justin Trudeau's words in the House of Commons earlier this month would have been much more credible if they had been accompanied by meaningful, concrete action. The B'nai Brith for instance, has outlined an 8-point plan of action for addressing antisemitism. When the Prime Minister spoke about the need to address ongoing persecution globally, he could have cast his mind to Canada's continued participation with the Safe Third Country Agreement with the United States. This agreement essentially creates an exclusion zone using our neighbour to the south as a buffer, preventing anyone who has been denied refugee status in the USA from making a second claim in Canada. The idea is that Canada and the United States are both safe countries so a decision made in one country can be applied in another. This week, the American government made the decision to use tear gas on people at the US–Mexico border to

ensure that they would never have a chance to even make a claim for refuge. Not. Safe.

The quotidian violence against Indigenous people in Canada, the pervasiveness of antisemitism and the treatment of people who seek refuge today belie the notion that Canada is a safe place. The language of Trudeau's apology would have us believe otherwise.

The apology rings hollow in the face of Canada's continued participation in the Safe Third Country Agreement, just as any language about reconciliation rings hollow in the face of continued boiled water advisories in First Nations communities across Canada and 86 Calls to Action that remain unanswered. Somewhere along the way, political leaders got it into their heads that they could compartmentalize the past, that words about historical wrongs didn't have to connect with contemporary issues. Once upon a time, words were constrained by contemporary lived experiences. Now realities on the ground no longer constrain flowery rhetoric. In his apology, Prime Minister Trudeau said that the Canadian government was "sorry for not apologizing sooner". Our concern is that if the government continues to apologize, instead of acting on contemporary issues of injustice, that there will be future apologies about how earlier apologies did not do enough. What a horrible, vicious circle that will be.

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## Notes

1. Christine Chevalier-Caron et Philippe Néméh-Nombré, "L'antisémitisme et l'hospitalité canadienne et québécoise," *HistoireEngagée.ca*, 7 novembre 2018. <https://histoireengagee.ca/lantisemitisme-et-lhospitalite-canadienne-et-quebecoise/>.

2. "Curious about how many of the TRC's calls to actions have been completed? Check Ian Mosby's Twitter" *CBC News*, Oct. 22, 2017. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/how-are-you-putting-reconciliation-into-action-1.4362219/curious-about-how-many-of-the-trc-s-calls-to-actions-have-been-completed-check-ian-mosby-s-twitter-1.4364330>.

## CHAPTER 4.

### REMEMBERING THE PRAGUE SPRING REFUGEES

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JAN RASKA

The year 1968 is synonymous with protest and social change. This August, the world marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and the suppression of the Prague Spring. As a result of this sudden crisis, Canada resettled close to 12,000 refugees from Czechoslovakia between September 1968 and January 1969. This movement of individuals and families in search of refuge serves as an important case study in Canada's history of refugee resettlement. It also provides greater context for Canada's recent refugee resettlement schemes. Between 2015 and 2017, the federal government welcomed over 40,000 refugees who fled civil war in Syria. As the public debate surrounding immigration continues to focus on annual intake, immigrant desirability, refugee resettlement, and the entry of asylum seekers, a discussion of evolving bureaucratic notions of who is a 'desirable' immigrant is also timely.

The Soviet-led invasion spurred thousands of Czechs and Slovaks to leave their country and seek safe haven elsewhere. Many of the individuals who left due to the events of 1968 were similar to a preceding movement of Czechs and Slovaks who fled the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in February 1948. As experienced professionals and skilled workers—including politicians, diplomats, clergy, business owners, professors, and doctors—they held pro-

democratic values and refused to live under a totalitarian regime. Many resettled in the West in the hopes of liberating their homeland from communism. At the height of the Cold War, when Canadians were overly vigilant against the arrival of undesirable individuals from the Eastern Bloc, federal officials were keen to admit anti-communist Czechs and Slovaks who had fled from the events of 1948. These newcomers were often celebrated by the Canadian public as ‘freedom fighters,’ but also mistrusted as potential communist sympathizers or spies.



*On the outskirts of Bratislava, a family prepares to cross the border into Berg, Austria (August 1968). International Organization for Migration (IOM).*

Those who left Czechoslovakia in 1968 had fled communism as a lived reality. They too held anti-communist values, but were more concerned with their ability to continue their professions and careers outside of their homeland. While relations between the West and the Eastern Bloc improved, Canadian officials were focused on the economic potential of these newcomers rather than their personal ideologies.

But what about those Czechoslovak nationals who were travelling aboard on business or for leisure, and who decided not to return home at the time of the invasion? Since these individuals had not

fled to a second country in which to claim asylum, they could not be considered refugees under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

At the time of the Soviet-led invasion, Canada was not a signatory to the UN convention because it guaranteed asylum as a right under international law – and would have prevented Canadian officials from removing individuals deemed to be ‘undesirable.’ Yet, federal officials followed the spirit of the convention in guiding their decisions on refugee admissibility and resettlement. The federal government used the precedent established by the 1956 Hungarian refugee movement, to initiate another special program whereby federal officials relaxed admission criteria and provided help with transportation to Czechs and Slovaks who demonstrated interest in coming to Canada. Why has the movement of Prague Spring refugees been largely overlooked in Canadian historical writing? What makes this movement unique in Canada’s history of refugee resettlement?

Existing literature on Canada’s resettlement of the Prague Spring refugees indicates that governmental self-interest and economic considerations played a role in the federal cabinet’s decision to resettle thousands of educated professionals and skilled workers who could make an immediate contribution to Canada’s economy and society. Scholars have also pointed to Cold War politics and the federal government’s decision to relax its immigration regulations in an attempt to embarrass the Soviet Union for ideological reasons. Humanitarian organizations, church groups, and refugee advocates identified the federal government’s ideological bias in resettling individuals and families fleeing from communism, while those who fled right-wing regimes were often ignored or prevented from entering Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Recent scholarship on the movement of Czech and Slovak refugees to Canada after the 1968 invasion suggests that the Canadian government intervened in the crisis out of economic self-interest that was officially promoted as a humanitarian response. In the late 1960s, relations between the West and the Eastern Bloc had improved and Canadian officials no longer deemed it necessary to embarrass the Soviet Union and unnecessarily heighten Cold War tensions. Federal officials intervened to select and resettle individ-

uals they deemed to be “good material” and “a small gold mine of talent” due to their professional and skilled backgrounds, years of work experience, and potential to integrate into Canadian society and contribute to the economy. Meanwhile, Czechs and Slovaks in Canada lobbied the federal government to pressure Soviet authorities for a complete withdrawal of Warsaw Pact forces from Czechoslovakia, for free elections to be held, and for more of their compatriots to be resettled in Canada.<sup>2</sup>

Why were refugees from Czechoslovakia referred to by Canadian officials as “good material,” and “a small gold mine of talent”? Why did federal officials seek out these individuals for resettlement in Canada? In order to answer these questions, we must first understand the reasons for their departure and why some Czechs and Slovaks who did not fit the convention definition were nevertheless considered as refugees by the Canadian government.

### **The Prague Spring**

After nearly two decades of communist rule, in which civil liberties were heavily curtailed, the economy became stagnant, and political change was suppressed, reformers within the Communist Party seized an opportunity to implement changes to Czechoslovakia’s political system. On 5 January 1968, Alexander Dubcek, a Slovak reformer, was elected as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Due to the failure of the 1953 uprisings in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, and the 1956 uprising in Poznan, Poland, reformist members of the Communist Party recognized that overt revolt against the hardline Soviet model of communism was hopeless. In March 1968, party reformers were bolstered when Antonin Novotny was replaced as president with General Ludvik Svoboda. The following month, Dubcek announced his political program, “socialism with a human face”, in which the communist system would be reformed from within. In the following months press censorship was abolished, civic freedoms were restored, citizens were free to exercise their religious traditions, and the political system was slowly liberalized. This period of communist liberalization in Czechoslovakia became known as the Prague Spring.

Overnight on 20-21 August, Warsaw Pact forces consisting of approximately 170,000 troops and 4,600 tanks from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia to suppress the Prague Spring and implement 'normalization' across all sectors of Czechoslovak society.<sup>3</sup> The Prague Spring reform movement which had begun with Dubcek's election as first secretary lasted seven months, two weeks, and two days. Western governments including Canada had ruled out a Soviet invasion in part because of improving relations between East and West, and the condemnation that such an action would bring from the international community.

### **Canada Responds**

The Soviet-led invasion caught Canadian officials by surprise. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was sunbathing on the beaches of Spain when news of the crisis reached him. Under the leadership of acting Prime Minister Paul Hellyer, the federal cabinet met and decided to urge Trudeau to cut his vacation short and return to Ottawa to lead a response to the events unfolding in Czechoslovakia. In the aftermath of the invasion, the federal cabinet considered whether the Canadian government could respond diplomatically by way of public protest without unnecessarily increasing tensions with the Soviet Union or failing to demonstrate support for its own Eastern European communities in Canada. As a member of the United Nations Security Council, the Canadian government ruled out any military intervention in Central Europe, but considered how best it could demonstrate its opposition to a breach of international law – more specifically state sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>4</sup>

Federal officials became aware that approximately 80,000 Czechoslovak nationals were outside of their country at the time of the invasion.<sup>5</sup> Many of them were professionals and skilled workers conducting business on behalf of companies back home, and students who were studying abroad, while other individuals were on vacation. Due to the invasion, many of these individuals and families decided to remain abroad. With Czechoslovakia's borders open,



thousands of their compatriots decided to leave and sought asylum in Austria, Yugoslavia, Italy, and other European countries.

Heavily influenced by its own political and economic self-interest, the Canadian government soon recognized that a humanitarian crisis was unfolding. Canadian officials hoped to permanently resettle many of the professionals, skilled workers, artists, and university students before American, Australian, British, French, Scandinavian, and New Zealand officials were given an opportunity to process them. Since many of the Czechs and Slovaks were already abroad at the time of the invasion, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees hesitated to define these individuals as convention refugees. This was not the case for Canadian officials who manipulated the definition of a refugee to include Czechs and Slovaks who were already abroad at the time of the Soviet-led invasion. The Prague Spring refugees for their part were also opportunistic. In some cases, individuals and families went 'embassy-shopping,' speaking with diplomatic officials from various Western countries before making a final choice about their resettlement. For some, the decision came down to how quickly they could be permanently resettled and how well they were received by Western officials. In some cases, Prague Spring refugees had found the reception provided by Canadian officials to be the most welcoming, further cementing their choice to come to Canada.

In early September, the federal cabinet met to implement a framework on how Canada would assist refugees from Czechoslovakia in search of permanent resettlement. Soon, an interdepartmental committee was struck with representatives from the Departments of External Affairs, Manpower and Immigration, National Health and Welfare, and the Solicitor General—who was responsible for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police—tasked with implementing a special program for Prague Spring refugees. On 5 September, Minister of Manpower and Immigration Allan J. MacEachen informed his cabinet colleagues that “a number of conditions had been waved to facilitate the movement to Canada of Czechoslovak refugees.”<sup>6</sup>

Immigration officials used the 1956 special program for Hungarian refugees as a precedent in establishing a similar program for Prague Spring refugees. Canadian immigration officials relaxed

admissions criteria, including medical examinations and security screening, and offered assisted passage to help bring Czech and Slovak refugees to Canada. Former Canadian immigration official Michael Molloy recalls arriving in Vienna three days after the Soviet-led invasion. Molloy had joined the immigration foreign service that same year and recalls that Canada's initial response to the crisis was slow. After a week of waiting for prospective refugees, they began to arrive at the Canadian embassy. Molloy spent the following four weeks, from dusk to dawn, signing thousands of visas to permit Czechs and Slovaks to resettle in Canada.<sup>7</sup> Between 8 September 1968, when the first group of refugees arrived in Canada, and 10 January 1969, when the special program was terminated, close to 12,000 refugees were brought to Canada.

The resettlement of the Prague Spring refugees remains one of Canada's largest coordinated postwar refugee movements. It is one example of the varied nature of bureaucratic responses to refugee admissibility and resettlement in Canada. In the case of the Prague Spring refugees, many of them were brought to Canada as political refugees who had fled the Soviet-invasion of their country. Yet, some were already abroad at time of the invasion and did not flee their homeland due to the invasion, nor did they meet the conditions to be deemed as convention refugees. For its part, the Canadian government had become aware that highly qualified individuals with professional backgrounds had desired to be resettled in the West. In providing a humanitarian response, Canadian officials manipulated the UN refugee convention definition to bring many of these Czech and Slovak professionals, skilled workers, and university students to Canada.

Since then, Canada has continued to resettle refugees in times of sociopolitical upheaval, including over 7,000 Ugandan Asians (1972-1973), some 8,000 Chileans (1973-1978), and over 77,000 Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotians (1975-1981). In autumn 2015, the Canadian government announced its commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees, most of whom were Muslim, and prioritized married couples, families, and children. Omitted from this movement were single males, due to a bureaucratic fear that they might hold extremist beliefs or connections to terrorist groups.

When thinking about Canada's history of refugee resettlement, we should consider how evolving bureaucratic notions of immigrant desirability have shaped which individuals were considered admissible for entry into Canada. This is particularly important in our post-9/11 world, in which Muslim refugees have often been considered in the West as 'undesirable' individuals despite their desire to attain sociocultural citizenship in their new country.

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## Notes

1. Gerald E. Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977), 233–34, 255; Victor Malarek, *Heaven's Gate: Canada's Immigration Fiasco* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1987), 102; Reginald Whitaker, *Double Standard: the Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1990), 6–9; Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 384; Harold Troper, "Canadian Immigration Policy since 1945," *International Journal* 48.2 (Spring 1993), 271–72.
2. Laura Madokoro, "Good Material: Canada and the Prague Spring Refugees," *Refugee: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 26.1 (2009), 168; Jan Raska, *Czech Refugees in Cold War Canada: 1945-1989* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 145-146; Peter Whelan, "203 from Czechoslovakia Combine Joy and Sorrow," *Globe and Mail*, 16 September 1968, 1–2.
3. Jeremi Suri, "The Promise and Failure of 'Developed Socialism': The Soviet 'Thaw' and the Crucible of the Prague Spring, 1964-1972," *Contemporary European History* 15.2 (2006): 153; Geraint Hughes, "British Policy towards Eastern Europe, and the Impact of the 'Prague Spring' 1964-1968," *Cold War History* 4.2 (2004), 126.
4. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Privy Council Office (hereafter PCO) fonds, RG 2, Series A-5-a, vol. 6338, file "Cabinet conclusions," item 4365, title "Situation in Czechoslovakia," 21 August 1968, 4.
5. Louise Holborn, *Refugees: A Problem of Our Time: The Work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951-1972, vol. 1* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975), 516–17.
6. LAC, PCO fonds, RG 2, Series A-5-a, vol. 6338, file "Cabinet conclusions," item 4431, title "Czechoslovak Refugees," 5 September 1968, 8.
7. Oral History with Michael Molloy, 3 December 2015. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 Collection (15.12.03MM).

## CHAPTER 5.

# LITTLE BEAR'S CREE AND CANADA'S UNCOMFORTABLE HISTORY OF REFUGEE CREATION

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BENJAMIN HOY

Refugees create complicated political and social climates. Federal decisions to admit or reject individuals, families, and communities fleeing from hardships intertwine humanitarian concerns, political profiteering, immigration policy, domestic security, and racial perceptions into an often-ugly mess. Refugees force countries to consider their moral obligations to those less fortunate and to examine the possibility of their own complicity in the international crisis that sparked movement. As Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi's September 2015 comments regarding the Syrian refugee crisis suggest, Canada's treatment of refugees is a matter of national pride and identity.<sup>1</sup> A country's failure to live up to domestic and international expectations opens it up to disdain and derision at home and abroad.

Although much of the recent media frenzy surrounding immigration and refugees has focused on Canada's obligation to reacquire or defend its reputation as a sanctuary for those fleeing violence, Canada's historical relationship to movement under stress is quite a bit more complicated. There is no simple binary between countries that produce refugees, and those that care for them. Most countries,

considered historically, are involved on both sides of the equation. The exodus of the Cree after the 1885 Rebellion offers a Canadian example. The Cree's experience serves not only as a reminder of our uncomfortable past, but also reveals some of the limitations in the model we continue to use to conceive of refugees and our obligations to them.



*Little Bear's Band as they await deportation to Canada in 1896. Montana University State-Northern, FM-1-134, Indian Peoples of the Northern Great Plains Digital Collection.*

By the 1870s, the decline in buffalo across the Canadian and American plains had created a crisis of subsistence for groups such as the Cree. Indigenous hunters moved back and forth across the border hoping to take advantage of the few remaining herds they could find. The situation grew worse as time passed. The American military began evicting “Canadian” Indigenous peoples found hunting south of the border.

The practical realities of life along the border made such actions difficult. Canada and the United States had surveyed their shared border along the plains less than a decade earlier (largely between 1872 and 1874) and the social, economic, and political connections people maintained reflected the newness of the division. The Cree, Lakota, Dakota, and Métis maintained extensive transnational con-

nections and hunting parties continued to cross the border with ease.

Canada's refusal to supply the rations and annuities it had promised to the Cree through treaties exacerbated the disappearance of the buffalo and led to widespread suffering, starvation, and resentment, despite the long distances hunting parties trekked. Canada's failure to honor its treaty promises reflected both an ineffectual and insufficient administration in the West as well as an intentional assimilationist policy. Canadian and American Indian agents withheld rations from individuals or groups who tried to live beyond the confines of their reservations, making starvation a powerful tool that Canada and the United States utilized to exert social, political, and cultural control.

Conditions for the Cree living near the border became grim by 1883. The Cree failed to find enough buffalo to support themselves and crop failures eliminated other sources of subsistence. The Cree were not alone. During the winter of 1882-1883, an estimated one-sixth to one-quarter of the Piegan population in Montana died of starvation. Desperate to avoid a similar fate, the Cree sent raiders against other Indigenous groups in an attempt to secure much needed horses and supplies. On both sides of the border, the Cree found themselves in dire straits.

The Northwest Rebellion of 1885, over prolonged disagreements between the Métis and the Canadian government, exacerbated an already difficult situation. During the rebellion, several members of Big Bear's Band of Cree killed nine settlers at Frog Lake and took others hostage. Although the Cree did not intend these attacks to be part of the rebellion, the Canadian government understood them as such. Canadian authorities captured Big Bear on July 2, 1885, and sentenced him to three years in prison, despite his attempt to prevent the violence. Imasees (Little Bear) and other Cree leaders including Lucky Man and Little Poplar remained free but feared similar reprisals.

In the aftermath of the 1885 Rebellion, Little Bear and Little Poplar led hundreds of their followers to the United States hoping to avoid arrest or persecution. The four hundred-mile journey, conducted without adequate provisions or horses, created great hard-

ship. The American government labeled the Cree as undesirable refugees upon their arrival and did little to provide them with assistance.

The categorization of the Cree as refugees condensed a complicated situation into a simple mould. The term refugee was correct in the sense that the Cree had left their homes and crossed national lines out of fear that if they stayed they would be subjected to violence, arrest, or persecution. The Cree did not, however, flee to wholly foreign lands. Indigenous boundaries did not coincide with European ones, making it difficult to apply European understandings of a 'refugee,' which relied on the boundaries of nation states, to a transnational people.

The United States' interpretation of Little Bear's band as refugees glossed over a complicated situation, but it allowed the American government to achieve two significant aims. First, the refugee status allowed the United States to distance itself from any legal or treaty responsibility it might have to the Cree, despite the historic connections Little Bear and others maintained on both sides of the border. In short, their refugee status allowed the United States to blame the Cree's predicament solely on the Canadian government. The American government provided the Cree refugees with rations, but did so as a matter of voluntary charity and as a peace-keeping effort. It admitted no legal compulsion to do so. Second, the Cree's refugee status also allowed the United States to chastise Canada for its unenlightened Indian policy, a satisfying position given Canada's indictment of American Indian policy following Sitting Bull's exodus from the United States after the battle of Little Big Horn, and the Nez Perce's attempted flight in 1877.

Although the American government's classification of the Cree as refugees allowed it to achieve a number of significant aims, it did little to improve the Cree's situation. Little Bear failed to convince the United States to recognize the Cree's claim to land south of the border. John Dewitt Clinton Atkins, commissioner of Indian Affairs in the United States, argued that the poor treatment of the Cree sullied the dignity of the American government, but his pleas resulted in few practical changes. American newspapers described the "Canadian" Cree as thieving scavengers and little was done to offer them a

permanent home south of the border. As public opinion of the Cree worsened, their status as refugees from Canada opened up calls for their expulsion.

In 1895, the United States Congress appropriated \$5,000 to rid the country of the “Canadian” Cree, arguing that they violated American gaming law and had become a general nuisance. Congress believed that Canada alone should be responsible for rectifying this difficult situation. During the summer of 1896 the American military deported Little Bear, Lucky Man (Papewes) and 523 Indigenous peoples, believed to be Canadian Cree, by force to Canada. While the American military promised that the Canadian government had granted the Cree amnesty, Northwest Mounted Police officers arrested Lucky Man and Little Bear as soon as the American military delivered them across the border. The Canadian government later dropped the charges against the two men, but the arrests confirmed longstanding fears of persecution by the Canadian state.

By the turn of the century, most of the Cree who had followed Lucky Man and Little Bear returned to Montana despite the hardships they had faced there. Over the next two decades, Little Bear continued to push for land. In 1916, almost thirty years after the rebellion had driven him from his home, Little Bear found a permanent home for his people on the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana.

The case of Little Bear reveals the challenges that a tight adherence to legal status can have in regions filled with motion and complexity. It highlights the ways that countries can distance themselves from political and legal responsibility by declaring a people as refugees instead of accepting some measure of culpability in their condition.

Moreover, it suggests that we must look beyond the admissions statistics themselves to inquire as to the long-term quality of living being provided to those fleeing violence. Although Canadian political leaders have recently publicized the number of refugees they would admit to Canada if they were elected to office, admission serves as only one component of refugee support. Little Bear and hundreds of Cree, for example, had no difficulty entering into the United States and even a forcible deportation did not keep them out



of Montana. For them, the difficulties occurred not in crossing the border but in securing land recognition and meaningful employment once there. Allowing refugees to fester in limbo for years, or for decades in the case of Little Bear, skirts responsibility, increases suffering, and encourages risk taking by those seeking refuge. Finally, Little Bear's case provides a cautious reminder that Canada, like many other countries, has not only accepted refugees, but also created them.

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### Notes

1. "Nenshi lashes out at Chris Alexander on refugee crisis," *CBC News*, Sept. 4, 2015. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/nenshi-immigration-refugee-crisis-chris-alexander-1.3216350>.



PART II.

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**MIGRATION EXPERIENCES AND  
REPRESENTATIONS**

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## CHAPTER 6.

# CREATING THE CANADIAN MOSAIC

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RYAN MCKENNEY AND BENJAMIN BRYCE

Canadians often describe their country as a “mosaic.” This idea is present on government websites and in many contemporary articles in the media (on outlets such as *The Globe and Mail*, *Maclean’s*, and the *Huffington Post*) and most importantly in the minds of people across the country. Though used in different contexts and with different goals, the mosaic almost always describes Canada as a multi-cultural landscape and symbolizes a national ideology of inclusion and diversity. Canadians hold great pride in this idea, placing it on the progressive end of a spectrum opposite to the American melting pot. Yet we rarely question where the term comes from.

Many Canadians would likely be astonished to find that the first person to use the term “mosaic” to discuss the national character of Canada was in fact an American. In 1922 the travel writer Victoria Hayward published *Romantic Canada*, a piece of travel literature detailing her journey from the Maritimes to British Columbia. She uses the term mosaic to refer to both the variance in European church architecture found in the Prairie provinces and to the Japanese fishermen of the Fraser River in British Columbia who had “stepped out of the Far East to serve this river of the Far West.” She painted a rather patronizing portrait of Canada, focusing on the welcoming Gaelic housewives of the Maritimes, the fusion of

French and Indigenous culture found in Huron villages, and the Swedish music carried on the winds of the Prairies. From Hayward's American point of view, Canada's population had distinctively "old world" characteristics, but incorporated smaller groups of Asians and Indigenous peoples to create an exotic landscape, which she referred to as a mosaic.

Hayward's concept was then adopted by the Canadian Kate Foster in her 1926 publication, *Our Canadian Mosaic*. She describes seventeen groups of immigrants from both Europe and Asia, and she details how they contribute to Canada as a whole. She concludes her book with a discussion of the Canadian mosaic as a "true painting for eternity," composed of a human pattern cemented together by "good will and friendliness born of mutual respect and confidence between all peoples within our borders." While this may seem close to our contemporary definition of the mosaic, she also emphasized the importance of conformity and repetition because "a principle of order must prevail in every ornamental composition – otherwise the pattern is spoiled and there will be disturbing patches." Her focus on structure suggests a desire for one group—Canadians of British heritage—to structure and mould the overall mosaic.

John Murray Gibbon pushed the mosaic into the Canadian mainstream in his 1938 book, *Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation*. Gibbon was already an influential figure in Canadian culture, involved in founding the Canadian Authors' Association and the creation of the Governor General's Awards. In a similar fashion to Foster, Gibbon devoted seventeen of his nineteen chapters to discussions of individual European "races", including descriptions of their countries of origin, a list of their common characteristics, and settlement patterns upon arriving in Canada. Like Foster, he emphasized the role of common community interests, such as churches and clubs, as the cement that joined both New and Old Canadians together. He also emphasized the role of education in integration, arguing that the teaching of the English language and Canadian values in public schools was the best way to ensure that immigrants became "Canadianized" in an efficient manner. Gibbon argued that children were the best target for Canadianization

because they were at a stage in their life when “their minds readily accept the life and thought of the country.”

In order to create this ideal Canadian, Gibbon praised only very specific ethnic traits and traditions, ones that he believed would fit into his definition of Canadian national identity. This can be seen most clearly not in what he included in *Canadian Mosaic*, but rather what he did not. He discussed a large number of “racial groups”, but every single one hailed from Europe. Asian immigrants, Aboriginal peoples, and people of African descent were completely absent from Gibbon’s definition of belonging in the northern nation.



John Murray Gibbon, *Canadian Mosaic* (1938).

Gibbon also believed that Canada should ultimately become British. In fact, the first thing he did when describing any ethnic group was to link them to Britain, whether it be the similar traits in the case of Scandinavians or historical ties in the case of Czechoslovakians. It was these specific traits and historical links that he sought to use as materials for the mosaic, while either replacing unwanted characteristics with Canadian values or leaving them in the Old World by discouraging the entrance of certain groups. He viewed “the Cana-

dian race of the future” as being “made up of over thirty European racial groups,” which would apparently continue the development of the Anglo-Saxon race, which itself was a “product of the commingling of perhaps a half dozen primitive stocks.” If Gibbon’s mosaic was a piece of art that illustrated the Canadian nation, then the frame which surrounded it was British. And if he praised diversity, he also did so in distinctly 1930s ways that emphasized the biological traits of European ethnic groups, and that looked to eugenic thoughts about selecting what groups should be incorporated into the national body.

When analyzed alongside the common contemporary perception of the mosaic as something synonymous with progressive multiculturalism, Gibbon’s model seems to lack several important elements of diversity. Twenty-first century conceptions of the mosaic have clearly evolved since Gibbon’s 1938 book, just as his theories were different than Hayward’s and Foster’s. Yet the definition of the mosaic has always revolved around how Canadians regard difference, with Hayward viewing it as exotic, Foster as a way to build a stronger nation, and Gibbon as something to change and fuse into the Anglo-Saxon race.

Evolving visions of the mosaic reflect how Canadians have understood immigration, belonging, and more recently multiculturalism. While some scholars, such as John Porter in his 1965 *The Vertical Mosaic*, have critically analyzed the mosaic, there continues to be a lack of discussion about how contemporary Canadians understand and engage with this powerful image of a society. The term is often batted around in the media and at citizenship ceremonies as an unquestionable marker of Canadian values. In the context of public debates about refugees, temporary workers, multiculturalism, and reasonable accommodation, Canadians would perhaps like to know where the term mosaic came from, and to reflect on its value as a positive metaphor about pluralism and citizenship.

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### **Further Reading**

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## CHAPTER 7.

### CONVERSATIONS WITH EGYPTIAN UBER DRIVERS: WHY EMIGRATE? WHY CANADA?

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MICHAEL AKLADIOS

Census Canada recently estimated that the proportion of Arabic speakers in Canada is projected to increase 200 per cent by 2036. Yet, the study of immigration and ethnicity in North America tends to ignore Middle Eastern immigrants. The region remains in the Western imaginary as an ahistorical and hermeneutically sealed zone.<sup>1</sup> However, one would be hard-pressed to find someone in Egypt today without a friend or relative who has emigrated.

I visited Egypt for a six-week research trip in summer 2017, to compile documents from state and institutional archives on the history of Egyptian immigration to Toronto and the New York/New Jersey area in the post-WWII period. In the process, I often asked myself what my study of the history of Egyptian emigration contributes to our present understanding of Egypt and its émigré populations. The answer to that question began to form as I traveled throughout the country. On every excursion from a hotel, I requested an Uber. There are approximately 150,000 Uber drivers in Egypt and it is the most convenient and comfortable form of travel for visitors. Stuck in mid-day traffic, I would engage the drivers in conversation. After nearly three-dozen conversations, patterns emerged.<sup>2</sup> The perception of emigration, its motivations, and

the expectations of those wishing to emigrate have all changed in the past sixty years.



*Cairo's Tahrir Square, mid-1900s. Wikimedia Commons.*

When I interviewed a self-described “Canadian of Egyptian origin” in Toronto last spring, who had immigrated to Canada in the early 1970s, he recalled seeing his own migration as a journey from city to village.<sup>3</sup> For him, as for many other Egyptians who began to emigrate to North America in the late 1950s, Toronto and Montreal were young, empty, and lacked the diversity of populations and services that characterized their city lives in Cairo and summers spent in Alexandria. They recounted that the streets of Cairo and Alexandria rivaled those of Paris and were the envy of western Europe.

The factors that once prompted many to emigrate were quite varied. First, the expanding post-secondary educational sector and private enterprise in Canada provided an endless array of opportunities to succeed. Second, their youthful sense of adventure; of exploration and dreams of self-made success. Third, fears of President Gamal Abd’ al-Nasser’s secret police and of being drafted into yet another regional war. The majority of émigrés up to the late-1970s were of middle-class backgrounds in Egypt and still remember a prevalent sense of dread that continued military spending would

further cripple the national economy. Yet, almost thirty interviewees to date have described their decision to leave as one of many options; whether pursuing higher education, youthful adventure, or job security and social mobility, most maintained the option of eventual return to Egypt years after their arrival.

Unlike the documented migrations of many ethnic groups in Canada, such as the Greeks, Italians, and Portuguese, the early immigration of Egyptians was not related to chain migration. Those who left knew very little of what life would be like in Canada and relied on mail and telephone services (routed through England) to maintain contact with their families. In time, the growing popularity of air travel shortened the distance and, alongside innovations in communications technologies, lessened the sense of separation and alienation in a new environment. By the late-1970s, military conflicts in the region and President Anwar al-Sadat's *Infitah* (opening up)—a 1973 liberalization scheme that opened the economy to foreign investment and private enterprise—further eroded the middle-class and increased the gap between rich and poor. Throughout the 1980s, North America drew in Egyptian immigrants with the majority choosing Toronto or Montreal in Canada (depending on their language proficiency) and New York/New Jersey or Los Angeles in the United States. President Hosni Mubarak's tepid approach to social and economic change increasingly caused those qualified immigrants to leave for better opportunities abroad. Where Canada's immigration policy remained tied to qualifications based on skills and training, the United States introduced the Green Card Lottery in 1996, and emigration from rural villages in Upper Egypt vastly increased the proportion of that country's Egyptian population. After the failures of the 2011 and 2013 revolutions in Egypt to produce qualitative social and political change, emigration is now highly sought-after.

Conversations in Egypt this summer always began the same way. The driver would inquire: "where are you from?" Maybe my slightly out-dated way of speaking Arabic gave me away. Or, maybe, it was the way I dressed: in shorts, rather than jeans, to alleviate the scorching heat. Yet again, it may have been the fairness of my skin, from too many Canadian winters. Whatever the case may be, none

of the drivers accepted my claim that I was visiting Cairo from my hometown of Alexandria, where I was born and raised until my family chose to emigrate in my youth. I would then share that I was living in Toronto, Canada and was visiting to collect sources for my research. Every driver, without fail, would then relate how he had a friend or relative in a North American city and plans to emigrate.



*Typical traffic congestion in Cairo, as pedestrians, commuters, and standing traffic vie for space. Author's photo.*

With a population nearing 100 million, people in Egypt feel the pressure of lacking social services, infrastructure, educational facilities, and housing. Most Uber drivers, men in their 20s and early 30s, drive part-time to augment their income from working in factories and government offices and to support their families. Some are unable to find steady employment since graduating from university and instead chose to finance a car and drive for Uber. They are fed up. Each feels the effects of the recent floating of the Egyptian pound and economic reforms to appease the International Monetary Fund. In addition, the death of the tourism industry, unbearable traffic congestion, and rampant corruption which pervades every sector of government has led many to become disillusioned with the quality of life in Egypt. These prospective immigrants are not poor,

the ability to own a car speaks to that. But, they are at the risk of becoming poor.<sup>4</sup>

Hemmed-in from every corner, many have applied several times and have been rejected. Now they are on their fourth or fifth try and await anxiously for a positive reply. Gone are the notions of youthful adventure. Gone is the idea of eventual return. What they see ahead of them as immigrants is a life of hard work, living paycheck-to-paycheck, supporting a family, and putting their kids to school; similar to their daily life of work, family, and community in Egypt. In fact, many realize it will be even harder to start anew and so far removed from all that is familiar. Then, why emigrate? Because, at the end of the day all the money paid in taxes and fees will pay for social services of worth to their lives. They will visit government offices and get their necessary business done without suffering bribes, insults, and ignorance. They will have confidence in the level of education provided to their children. They will eat a meal, whether at home or in a restaurant, without fear of it being contaminated.

While new housing projects are ever on the rise, expanding the city limits of Cairo and Alexandria and dotting the landscape along the desert road connecting the two cities, there is little to gain for the 'average' Egyptian as foreign investment from wealthy émigrés and Arabs from the Gulf states continue to drive up the housing market. In addition, multi-million pound luxury seasonal beach compounds under development west of Alexandria offer no solutions for the majority of working-class Egyptians. Instead, they serve as daily reminders of how the other half lives. Working-class Egyptians are being excluded and penned-in in their own country. What were once expansive stretches of public-access beaches are now daily reminders of just another space lost in favor of private enterprise meant to serve the interests of the rich and of foreign visitors. With few other options before them, prospective émigrés have the example and knowledge from those that succeeded before them. They now rely on networks of chain migration to gain entry and find opportunities abroad.

Then, why Canada? Sixty years ago, when Egyptians first began to emigrate to North America in large numbers, Canada was hardly

a preferred destination. At first, dominantly Egyptian Jews and Egyptian nationals of European descent left due to the nationalization projects of Gamal Abd' al-Nasser's revolutionary regime. They chose to return to their countries of origin, to the newly created State of Israel, or to New York in search of new opportunities in America.<sup>5</sup> Then, they were followed by Coptic Christian and some Muslim graduate students traveling on student visas, lured by scholarships procured through the United States' Cold War-era Educational Council for Foreign Medical Graduates. Contract lecturers at universities, doctors, and engineers followed, and continued to dream of eventual return. In the 1960s and 1970s, Canada drew more Egyptian immigrants to its expanding post-secondary educational sector and professional jobs in the private sector. Yet still, far more chose the United States over Canada. For many, all they knew of Canada at the time was Montreal. To be more specific, they knew of McGill University and the French connection enforced by Jesuit and Dominican institutions in Cairo and Alexandria. Since then, Toronto has grown in significance for prospective Egyptian émigrés. Particularly since the proportion of French speakers in Egypt has dwindled in recent years. Today, there is a palpable fear of growing xenophobia and anti-Arab rhetoric in the United States and western Europe. Some have related that a Canadian visa would make it easier for them to then pursue opportunities in the United States, Australia, Britain, France, or Germany. As pragmatic migrants, they wish to test the waters and leave open the possibility of future migrations. However, most see Canada as their final destination and dream of its empty spaces, its promises of equitable treatment, and publicized respect for immigrant communities.

Leaving for the airport to catch my return flight to Toronto, I again engaged my Uber driver in conversation. He asked where I was heading and if I enjoyed my time in Egypt. My response: "I'm heading to Toronto, but I'm going to miss Egypt. There's nowhere quite like it." He smirked. As the conversation progressed, it took an increasingly sombre tone. He was still processing the announcement earlier that day that the government raised the residential water-tax by 70 per cent. He couldn't understand how he could be a citizen of a country where he was not respected. He insisted that:

“this is my country and I ask my government to respect me as a human being. They don’t. It’s a hard life abroad, but at least they respect you.” His primary example of this respect was the behaviour of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. “Canada doesn’t have a president like we do,” he informed me,

they have a minister of government. Can you imagine [President] al-Sisi ever going on public television and apologizing to anyone? Yet, the Canadian Prime Minister, when that wrongfully imprisoned man [Omar Khadr] was all over the news earlier, went out and publicly apologized! He apologized and that’s how they treat people. There’s respect for a human being there. [laughs] That would never happen here.<sup>6</sup>

Today, struggling working-class Egyptians rely on transnational networks of chain migration and media reports in an increasingly globalized world. They view the permanent move to Canada not as a temporary expedient giving them access to education and social mobility, but as an escape; from decay, corruption, and stagnation to a developed city, with sound planning and vital social services. They are searching for stability and security for their families. Finding little work or opportunities to succeed and frustrated with the quality of life, or rather the lack thereof, emigration is now the most viable of their remaining options. In the tense political climate of Trumpism and escalating xenophobia in western Europe, they choose Canada, lured by the promise of a safe haven to raise their children and live in peace.

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## Notes

1. Akram Khater, "Globalizing the Middle East: Migration, Diaspora and Transnational Communities," Address to the Center For Global and Area Studies, University of Delaware, October 14, 2015.
2. To respect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, no names are disclosed and subjects are referred to as "the driver(s)" throughout.
3. Mahmud (pseud.) interviewed in Ontario, 13 March 2017.
4. While "drivers" were representative of both the Christian and Muslim faiths, Coptic Christians must also contend with escalating fears of persecution.
5. For an engrossing account of the life stories of Jewish and European Egyptian nationals refer to: Liliane S. Dammond, *The Lost World of the Egyptian Jews: First-Person Accounts from Egypt's Jewish Community in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: IUniverse, 2007).
6. This case had particular resonance for this individual because Omar Khadr's parents are Canadian citizens who emigrated from Egypt, his mother originally of Palestinian descent.

## CHAPTER 8.

# OLD STOCK CANADIANS: ARAB SETTLERS IN WESTERN CANADA

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SARAH CARTER

Syrians have a long history in Canada. Paul Anka is perhaps the best known Canadian of Syrian ancestry. But there were others; many of whom we must consider “Old Stock Canadians.” Somewhat less well known, for example, but still very popular in his day, was “Canada’s King of the Fiddle,” Ameen “King” Ganam, born in Swift Current in 1914. He entertained from a young age in Saskatchewan and then in Edmonton starting in the 1940s, later moving to Toronto where he had his own radio program the “King Ganam Show.” Ganam was one of the first inductees into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame. A 1954 article about him began

With his dark good looks, flashing brown eyes and Syrian background, King Ganam looks as if he’d be most at home dashing across the desert on an Arabian steed. But says he, the only plains he has ever dashed across are those in Southern Saskatchewan where he was born and grew up.<sup>1</sup>

The southern Saskatchewan plains where Ganam was born, and that he dashed across, were home to many Arab settlers. Most referred to themselves and were known as Syrians, meaning that they came from an area encompassing present-day Syria and Lebanon. Arab

settlers from Syria/Lebanon arrived in Western Canada starting well over one hundred years ago. They settled throughout the West, but there was a significant cluster of Arabs in southern Saskatchewan on arid marginal land, in the heart of the infamous triangle that Captain John Palliser identified as an extension of the Great American Desert. Most were from eastern Lebanon and they included Muslims and Christians.<sup>2</sup> They were generally single men, arriving on the Canadian prairies through the United States. Others arrived as families. Some filed on homesteads of 160 acres, and “proved up,” receiving title to their land and persisted for decades. Others, like thousands of would-be homesteaders, deserted or abandoned their land. Some purchased land that they farmed. Aside from farming, Arab settlers operated general stores, bakeries and cafes in towns throughout the West and some were traveling merchants, visiting the isolated farms on foot or by horse and wagon in summer, and sleigh in winter.

One example is Saleh “Charlie” and Shrefey Gader and family.<sup>3</sup> The couple met and married in the U.S. and they went back to Syria briefly before arriving in Saskatchewan in 1912, purchasing land near Pambrun. They farmed and Charlie was a traveling salesperson of goods while also taking on any available jobs, such as picking rocks. They bought a general store in McMahan in 1924, where Charlie initiated the establishment of a school and was a trustee. Selling the store they bought land near McMahan in 1927 and here they survived the Depression and raised their twelve children, one dying in infancy. They purchased more land and machinery over the years and had a large operation by the time the couple retired to Swift Current in 1951. Their daughter remembered that their home was “open to all visitors and everyone was made welcome, no matter who it was, strangers included. There were many times when people stayed for days...”.



*King Ganam, circa 1957 (CBC Still Photo Collection).*

The Salloums also farmed in southern Saskatchewan. One of my favourite books, *Arab Cooking on a Saskatchewan Homestead* by Habeeb Salloum, tells the story of his parents and family.<sup>4</sup> In 1923 Salloum's father, a peasant farmer, came from the "far Syrian desert with sands blowing, to the Saskatchewan desert of wind and snow." Seeking a more tranquil life in the midst of the turmoil of the French occupation of Syria, he left his young family and what was then

the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon for Saskatchewan where he had relatives. His family followed in 1927 to a homestead north of Val Marie. While they had a good crop in 1928, this venture could not have begun at a more catastrophic time, as after 1929 there were no grain crops for years on this parched land, and the soil “blew back and forth like the deserts of Arabia.” But they had experience with this harsh terrain; his parents were accustomed to growing chickpeas and lentils which had adapted over centuries to the desert climate, and with these dishes, as well as yogurt, the Saloums survived the Depression in the middle of the dustbowl. These “pulse” crops have been found to flourish in the dry, fertile soil of Saskatchewan. Canada is now one of the major exporting countries of chickpeas and lentils, crops first introduced to the prairies by Arab settlers. Regina has been described as the “next hummus capital.”<sup>5</sup>

Arabs settled throughout Western Canada. Michael and Shafia (Malouf) Ateah were from Mount Lebanon, Syria. They met and married in Winnipeg and settled first on the Fort Alexander Reserve.<sup>6</sup> Michael traded with the Anishinabe for furs, fish and berries. The children attended the residential school at Fort Alexander. Another Syrian settler was nearby, a young man named Khalel, who traded at Little Black River. In 1912 Michael filed on a homestead on what was then the lonely peninsula of Victoria Beach on Lake Winnipeg where they raised a family of eight children. Khalel filed on a homestead beside them. Shafia cooked delectable Arab dishes and she grew vegetables from her homeland including large quantities of beans that she sold. She preserved food using methods used for generations in Syria, but also learned from local Anishinabe women how to smoke gold eye. The Ateahs helped to make “VB” the popular resort that it remains to this day. Daughter Laela Ateah-Lester published *Cedars of Lebanon*, a fascinating history of this family in Syria and Manitoba.

Near North Battleford Saskatchewan there was a colony of settlers from Assyria founded in 1902 by 36 men, women, and children. They were joined by 40 more in 1906, with others arriving after World War I.<sup>7</sup> They were from the Urmia region of northwest Persia (Iran). Isaac Adams and Assyrian medical missionary was the

organizer of this venture. Farming in the colony was a struggle, and by 1914 many had moved into “Chisholm Town” in North Battleford. They ran small businesses such as grocery stores, a tannery, a tailor shop, and a pool room.

There were also settlers from Syria in Alberta. Hassan Shaben homesteaded north of Brooks Alberta, having arrived in Canada after some years of working in Iowa.<sup>8</sup> On his application for a homestead the dominion lands agent noted his country of birth as “Seria,” the “middle part.”<sup>9</sup> Hassan’s brother Abdul homesteaded nearby. Another brother Sam and brother-in-law Mike tried homesteading and then went into business in Endiang, Alberta, establishing a grocery store and a poolroom. A widowed sister Amina and her daughter also eventually made it to Alberta but their ship was re-routed to Mexico and they were stranded for four years.<sup>10</sup> Sam and Abdul retrieved their sister and niece in Laredo, Texas in 1915.

The town of Lac la Biche Alberta recently celebrated 100 years of Lebanese settlement there, where a mosque was built in 1958. The Al Rashid Mosque, Canada’s first, was opened in Edmonton in 1938 and is today at Fort Edmonton Park and still in use.

Arab settlers encountered obstacles and hardships aside from drought, frost, hail and insects. Arabs in North America faced a heritage of fabricated mythologies and crude caricatures. Some of these are to be found in James S. Woodsworth’s *Strangers Within Our Gates or Coming Canadians*. In his chapter on “Levantine Races,” Woodsworth lamented the arrival of “six or seven thousand” Syrians in Canada.<sup>11</sup>

Salloum remembered Saskatchewan as a “land where we tasted bitterness.”<sup>12</sup> He had memories of kind teachers in the tiny school at Minot, but as a boy he was “burdened with a feeling of imperfection.” In his poem “The Prairie Rubaiyat” Salloum wrote “Cruel were my schoolmates, taunting me ‘infidel.’ And ‘foreigner’ who came in their land to dwell.”<sup>13</sup> He was anxious to leave the parched prairies of blowing dust and piercing sand, and was pleased to have the opportunity during World War II to join the Air Force. His brother joined the Navy. Salloum never returned to live on the prairies, but his parents retired to Swift Current, and they “always praised

Saskatchewan, this part of Canada which was their adopted land.” They thought of Saskatchewan as a “paradise.”<sup>14</sup>

Habeeb Salloum concluded his book with the following phrase: “The saga of the Arab immigrants is truly the story of Canada.” He feared they were being forgotten, as those with Arab heritage sought to assimilate. He hoped “fellow Canadians and others, after reading our family’s saga will feel that Arab Canadians have contributed to Canada’s history.”<sup>15</sup>

I share the hope that this history will not be forgotten and the belief that the saga of Arab immigrants is truly the story of Canada. If such a category as “old stock Canadians” exists (in the words of Prime Minister Stephen Harper) then Syrians surely belong there.

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## Notes

1. *Recorder*, 20 Aug., 1954, 3.
2. Hugh Henry, “Lebanese Community,” *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan: A Living Legacy* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2005), 545.
3. Rose (Gader) Paul, “Charlie and Shrefey Gader,” *Patchword of Memories: Amphion, Balfour...* (Wymark and District History Book Committee, 1985) 382-5.
4. Habeeb Salloum, *Arab Cooking on a Saskatchewan Homestead: Recipes and Recollections* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2005). See also Habeeb Salloum, “Reminiscence of an Arab Family Homesteading in Southern Saskatchewan,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 15:2 (1983): 130–38.
5. Gordon Pitts, “Saskatchewan’s Prince of Pulses: Murad Al-Katib Eyes a Global Food Powerhouse...” *Globe and Mail*, 26 May, 2010.
6. Laela Ateah-Lester, *Cedars of Lebanon* (Winnipeg: The Columbia Press Ltd., 1951).
7. Dr. Arian Ishaya, “The Assyrian Colony in the Canadian Prairies.” <http://www.jaas.org/edocs/v1/ishaya.pdf>. See also Jennifer Higgs, “Presby-assyrians,” *Presbyterian Record*, 1 Jan. 2008. <http://presbyterianrecord.ca/2008/01/01/presby-assyrians>.
8. Endiang History Book Committee, *Endiang: Our Home* (Endiang Alberta 2002): 527 -9.
9. Provincial Archives of Alberta, homestead file, Hussien Shaben, S24, T24, R10, W4, film 2925, file 2126935.
10. *Endiang*, 528.
11. James S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates or Coming Canadians* (Toronto: The

Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1909), 167-9. See also Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)

12. Salloum, "Reminiscence," 138.

13. Salloum, *Arab Cooking*, 304-6.

14. Salloum, "Reminiscence," 138.

15. Salloum, *Arab Cooking*, 308.



## CHAPTER 9.

# NOT SO ACCIDENTAL: FARMWORKERS, CAR CRASHES, AND CAPITALIST AGRICULTURE

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EDWARD DUNSWORTH

Early in August 2018, near the southern Italian city of Foggia, sixteen migrant farmworkers from various African countries were killed in two separate car accidents. In both cases, vans taking migrants back to camp after work collided with trucks carrying tomatoes from the very fields where they had spent the day toiling. The tragedy brought international media scrutiny to the Puglia region's agricultural sector, where African migrants are housed in squalid camps and ferried from farm to farm by mob-connected recruiters to work dangerous jobs for minimal pay and with few protections. It also sparked resistance from farmworkers themselves, who on 8 August took the roads of the tomato district, chanting "we are not slaves, no to exploitation."

This horrific loss of life came, unfortunately, as little surprise to activists and academics working on farm labour, both in Italy and around the world. In Canada, it called up memories of the 2012 crash in Hampstead, Ontario, when a van taking Latin American poultry farm workers home collided with a transport truck, killing ten farmworkers and the truck driver and leaving just three survivors. For me, it also brought to mind the countless times during my research on tobacco labour in twentieth-century Ontario that

I've come across reports of tobacco workers dying on the road while looking for work or heading into town after the workday.

*The*  
**Norfolk Observer**

CIRCULATION 5,200      *A Farm and Home Newspaper for Norfolk People.*      12 PAGES

VOLUME II.      SIMCOE, ONTARIO, MONDAY, MARCH 23, 1936      NUMBER 45

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# CROSSING CRASH KILLS FIVE

## *Speculators Seeking Tobacco Rights?*

### *Applications to Grow Now at 600-Mark*

**Expect Applications To Be Greatly Reduced After Investigation**

**MUST SIGN CONTRACTS**

A last-minute rush on Friday brought the number of applications for permission to grow tobacco crops this year to approximately 600, and the Growers Average Adjustment committee is finally up to its ears in the work

### *As Belgian Family Met Death*



The above pictures, taken by an Observer reporter, give some idea of the ghastly tragedy near Delhi Friday morning which snuffed out five lives. At left is shown the car driven by Maurice Vandenhende which was struck by a Wabash engine. Debris from the wreck may be seen at right. (Additional pictures on pages 6 and 7)

### *Belgians Die When Auto Rams Train Near Delhi*

**Seeking Work In Tobacco Two Men, Two Girls and Woman Meet Deaths**

**FROM BLENHEIM AREA**

Norfolk Observer, March 23, 1936.

In 1936, for example, the Verheecks, a Belgian immigrant family of four living in Blenheim, Ontario, received a tip that work was available for them on a tobacco farm 150 kilometers down the highway in Delhi. Under the economic pressures of the Great Depression, that was enough to get them on the road, and the four of them – mother Sidonia, father Acheele, and daughters Georgette and Marlette, aged 17 and 12 – set out the next day along with a family friend, Maurice Vandenhende. Just outside of Delhi, however, their car failed to brake at a rail crossing and was struck by an oncoming train, killing all five.<sup>1</sup>

In the media and in the evaluations of police and other state officials, crashes such as these are usually labelled as “accidents,” though not blameless ones. Forensic investigators attempt to determine exactly what happened leading up to and at the exact moment of the collision, in large part with a view to ascribing culpability. Did someone run a stop sign? Were all drivers properly licensed? Step-

ping back a bit from the scene of the crash and adopting a broader perspective on the propensity of farmworkers to be involved in car crashes, it quickly becomes apparent that categories like “accident” and “individual responsibility” are woefully inadequate for explaining the all-too-common occurrence of tragedies like those in Foggia, Hampstead, and Delhi.

Instead, it is more accurate to understand dying by vehicular collision as an occupational hazard of capitalist agriculture. While capitalist agriculture – at least in unmechanized crops – is known for being labour-intensive, it is also what we might call *land-extensive*. Over the last hundred-plus years, downward pressures on commodity prices have encouraged producers to grow food on ever-greater scales in order to minimize the per-unit cost of production. They have also tended to specialize: while mixed-crop farms still exist, more and more common are vast fields of a single crop, also known as mono-cropping.

This lay-out of land and crops has advantages for producing at scale but poses a challenge to employers when it comes to labour. Most agricultural commodities require a surge of workers for only short periods of time – most obviously during harvests. Thus, a persistent feature of capitalist agriculture has been the circulation of labour across vast expanses of space, as workers travel to the places that require their labour power. This need for mobile labour has engendered numerous techniques for supplying it—from private recruiters to state-managed guestworker programs—dating back well over a century.<sup>2</sup> Historian Gunther Peck has written brilliantly on the ways in which turn-of-the-twentieth-century padrones “commodified” mobility and space in building large commercial empires based on labour supply throughout the North American west.

Even after farmworkers arrive in the distant places where their labour is needed, travel across large distances remains an important feature of their life and work. As farm sizes grow, it is not uncommon for farmers to own or rent multiple fields distributed across large areas. In my own experience working alongside Mexican migrants on farms in southwestern Ontario, the farthest field we travelled to was a 45-minute drive from the home farm and

bunkhouse. The farmer had it timed so that we would depart exactly 45 minutes before sunrise, driving through the dark in order to arrive right as the sun's first light streamed across the field, allowing for maximum production during the daylight hours. Some days we would work until dark before returning to the bunkhouse. Workers often took advantage of the long drives to sneak in a few more minutes of sleep, sometimes leaving the driver as the only person awake in the van. Fortunately, he was not shy about blasting *norteña* music to keep himself awake, napping coworkers be damned.



*Returning to the vans at the end of the day, August 2010. Author's photo.*

Farms are also, of course, usually located at some distance from the nearest shop or town, meaning that workers wanting to run an errand after work often need to travel by bicycle or foot, along poorly lit rural roads with no sidewalks, a situation that has been insightfully described by geographer Emily Reid-Musson.

Taken together, these aspects of capitalist agriculture ensure that farmworkers spend a surprising amount of time in transit, in cars or vans, or on bicycle or foot. As Frank Bardacke writes in the prologue to his history of the United Farm Workers, cars are “perhaps

the most essential agricultural implements in California.” And time on the road, especially with fatigued drivers, the conditions of rural roadways, and an absence of regulation around work-related travel, brings a greater likelihood of “accidents,” a fact that I’ve been repeatedly reminded of during my research. To give just one more example, in 1942, a First Nations tobacco worker named Alex Porter (likely from Munsee-Delaware nation) was changing a flat tire on his car, just east of Tillsonburg when he was struck by a passing vehicle that did not remain on the scene. Porter was listed as being in “critical condition” and it is not clear what became of him.<sup>3</sup>

The two examples from my research (out of dozens) make it clear that while the methods of labour supply have changed over time, capitalist agriculture’s requirement of mobile workers moving across vast spaces – and the dangers inherent in this set-up – have remained constant. Also stubbornly persistent has been the inability for most observers and authorities to get beyond the “accident” paradigm and consider the structural reasons why such incidents continue to happen or what might be done to curtail them.

In Italy, in the wake of the horrific deaths of sixteen men, there are some glimmers of hope. The Puglia region has committed to implementing a public transit system to safely transport farm workers during the harvest season, something that unions and farm labour activists have been advocating for years. In Canada, despite calls from activists for an inquest into the Hampstead crash, Ontario’s chief coroner ultimately declined, determining that the collision was a result of “driver error,” and that an inquest was not likely to produce recommendations that would prevent similar incidents in the future. An examination of the history of automobile accidents and farmworkers reveals that such incidents are not isolated tragedies, but part and parcel of capitalist agriculture, a structural problem that requires structural solutions.

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## Notes

1. “Crossing Crash Kills Five,” *Norfolk Observer*, March 23, 1936.

2. For more on the geography of capitalist agriculture, see the work of Don Mitchell,

especially *The Lie of the Land?: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and *They Saved the Crops: Labor, Landscape, and the Struggle Over Industrial Farming in Bracero-Era California* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

3. Condition Is Still Critical," *Simcoe Reformer*, September 10, 1942.

## CHAPTER 10.

# ARAB-CANADIAN FOODSCAPES AND AUTHENTICITY

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MICHAEL AKLADIOS

Visiting diverse Middle Eastern restaurants across the Greater Toronto Area, one quickly discovers that they all feature tabbouleh on the menu. As an Egyptian, I had never eaten tabbouleh until I started my undergraduate degree at York University in Toronto. It is not part of the Egyptian tradition. Interestingly, while Syrian and Lebanese emigrants found their way to Egypt in large numbers throughout the mid- to late-nineteenth century, this side-dish never made its way into mainstream Egyptian cuisine, and especially, the average family kitchen. However, in North America it has come to be defined as “authentically” Middle Eastern.

The first time I tried tabbouleh, I was with a group of friends from various ethno-cultural backgrounds. When I asked what kind of salad that “green dish” was, I was met with confused expressions. The person across the table asked me: “I thought you were Egyptian?” Somehow, not knowing what tabbouleh was made my very claim to “Egyptian-ness” questionable. This simple appetizer had come to define what it meant to be Middle Eastern in the western imagination. Meanwhile, Egyptian kushari will never be found in a restaurant in the GTA. Eaten since at least the nineteenth-century, this famous staple of Egyptian cuisine will only be found in family

kitchens and mosque and church festivals. This dish, central to my own memories of 'home', remains confined to the familial private sphere and community cultural festivals.



*Kushari is made of rice, macaroni, and lentils mixed together, topped with tomato-vinegar sauce, garnished with chickpeas and crispy fried onions and sprinkled with garlic juice and hot sauce. Wikimedia Commons.*

Why is something as seemingly simple as food so influential to the average Canadian's conception of the Middle East and its culture? Food carries messages about class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and identity. Food is not only what is materially before us or the raw ingredients which go into making a particular dish: it has symbolic significance. For food historians, two terms encapsulate the relationship between food and culture. First, "foodways" represent the connection between ethnicity and food. Foodways can often be a point of social contact and outreach, a way of expressing identity, and a tangible way to remember 'home'. Second, "foodscapes" represent the culinary cultures of a place. If foodways are the material and cultural significance of food to a group's identity, then foodscapes are the physical manifestations of culture across space in the proliferation of ethnic restaurants, markets, grocers, food festivals and street-corner vendors.<sup>1</sup> How, then, have Syro-Lebanese food-



ways come to dominate public (commercial) foodscapes in Toronto and successfully push out other Middle Eastern immigrant groups' distinctive ethnic cuisines?

Traditionally, the 'Arab world' comprises 22 countries and territories which speak Arabic. These territories occupy an area stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Arabian Sea in the east, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean in the southeast. From 1863 to 1915, Syrian and Lebanese Catholics emigrated in large numbers to escape overpopulation, economic stagnation, and the military draft. Approximately 100,000 emigrated from Greater Syria. Until 1878, the flow went predominantly to Egypt. Thereafter, and particularly after 1899, Syro-Lebanese migrants largely went to North America and Australia.

Canada is home to a large and vibrant Syro-Lebanese immigrant community. Since the late-nineteenth century, immigrants arrived in search of job opportunities and social mobility. Most often, these single men headed to the urban centers of Toronto and Montreal. They worked in factories, as peddlers in markets and on the streets, and as independent shop-owners. They sent money back home in the form of remittances to support their families and held dreams of eventually buying a small plot of land in their home village, to call their own. Ultimately, few chose to return.<sup>2</sup>

Between the First and Second World Wars, border restrictions across North America tightened through the enactment of racist and nativist policies. For many Arab immigrants, the dream of returning to Greater Syria faded. Family reunification in Canada replaced dreams of returning, as immigrants chose to sponsor their families and began to establish a life for themselves. Initially, social patterns and mutual aid developed around familial networks in tight-knit, yet spatially scattered, communities. The family's patriarchal structure extended out into how the community worked together to regulate female honor and support the productive capacities of the family economy. Peddler mobility meant greater cultural integration as migrants had sustained contact with western society and adapted quickly to language and fashion codes. As more and more sought out entrepreneurship and family reunification, the

rising population meant greater cohesion and visible markers of identity, such as churches and mosques, markets, street vendors, dry cleaners, and general stores.

The centrality of religion in spiritual and personal life choices persisted even after dispersal into the suburbs in the post-World War II period. The house of worship, and to a great extent the grocer, continued to serve as nexuses of community cohesion, made more accessible by advancing transportation technology.<sup>3</sup> These trends grew to unprecedented proportions by the 1960s, especially after the introduction of new immigration regulations and policies in 1962 and 1966. Those changes set the stage for the introduction of the points system in 1967. From as early as 1962, rather than ethnic and racial classifications for exclusion based upon country of origin, new immigration regulations (at least on paper) placed emphasis on education, skill, and greater inclusiveness. For émigrés from a war-torn and economically stagnant Middle East region, these gates creaking open meant greater opportunities for stability and security.<sup>4</sup>

Rather than one unified Arab-immigrant community, there are many religiously and geographically exclusive groups. Particularly after the 1960s, Middle Eastern immigration has been marked by a high level of diversity. Egyptians became the largest immigrant population, followed by Tunisians, Moroccans, Algerians, Iraqis, Libyans, and Palestinians. Yet, the timing of Syro-Lebanese immigration has left its mark on Canadians'—and in fact, most North Americans'—conception of Middle Eastern cuisine. Specifically, Syro-Lebanese entrepreneurs and restaurateurs mobilized images and standards of what an “authentic” Middle Easterners' food should look like. Often, these standards set expectations for non-Arab consumers and resulted in the coercion of future diverse proprietors to adopt Lebanese dishes on their menus or else risk being “inauthentic”. By inauthentic, I mean not truly Middle Eastern. Now, the typical Middle Eastern dish in the GTA is, in most instances, a particularly Levantine dish.

Most often, non-Arab Canadians encounter Middle Eastern cuisine in the commercial public sphere. The earliest shops were established in the interwar period, to serve the Christian community

from Greater Syria. Various markets, small restaurants, and Lebanese-dominated pastry shops, served as points of cultural contact with the city's many Greeks, Italians, Yugoslavs, Albanians, Indians, Jews, and Armenians. Often, the basic ingredients served these multiple traditions and were highly sought after. Yet, over time Toronto's ethnic groups began to hold certain expectations of what a "Middle Eastern" market or restaurant should sell.<sup>5</sup> These expectations continue to shape the prevailing understanding of the region's foodways. What remains in the private familial sphere, exists outside the social imagination of western eyes and mouths.

Syro-Lebanese restaurateurs developed and standardized the menu and partly reinforced western perceptions of Oriental sensuality. Let us return to the prevalence of tabbouleh. We can find this appetizer in Middle Eastern restaurants throughout the city, across national and ethnic traditions. The Mezzeh (appetizer) section of the menu allows us another example of Syro-Lebanese dominance in commercial foodways. Few restaurants in the GTA carry foule, considered the "national dish" of Egypt.<sup>6</sup> It rarely finds its way onto the menus of 'Middle Eastern' restaurants. Where it is offered, it is an appetizer according to the Syro-Lebanese tradition and served with tabbouleh, diced tomatoes, and hummus garnish.

This is representative in itself. Foule is traditionally a cheap, protein-rich meal, sold by street vendors in Egypt for the equivalent of 50 cents. It is eaten for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, sometimes all three in the poorest homes. This simple dish has been marginalized to the appetizer section because of its association with poverty and to a minority of appetizer menus across the Arab-Canadian foodscape because of its place in the Syro-Lebanese tradition. The diminution of this food in Middle Eastern restaurants in Toronto, and the routine inclusion of tabbouleh, represents the accommodation of Middle Eastern foodways to North American tastes. Tastes which are historically informed by the Syro-Lebanese tradition and by the image of the Orient as exotic, opulent, and sensuous.<sup>7</sup>

The next time you find yourself in an "authentic" Middle Eastern restaurant. Ask yourself: is this cuisine authentically Middle Eastern? Or, is it authentically Levantine Arab-Canadian?

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## Notes

1. *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History*, edited by Franca Iacovetta, Valerie J. Korinek, and Marlene Epp, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); *Food For Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*, edited by Joanna Kadi (Boston: South End Press, 1994).
2. Baha Abu-Laban, *An Olive Branch on the Family Tree: The Arabs in Canada*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980); May Ahdab-Yehia, "The Lebanese Maronites: Patterns of Continuity and Change," in *Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities*, edited by Sameer Y. Abraham and Nabeel Abraham (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 147-62.
3. Fouad Assaad, "Egyptians," in *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*, edited by Paul R. Magocsi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 453-62; Gregory Orfalea, *The Arab Americans: A History* (Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2006).
4. Ninette Kelley and M. J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1998).
5. William G. Lockwood and Yvonne R. Lockwood, "Continuity and Adaptation in Arab American Foodways," in *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream*, edited by Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 515-550.
6. In 2014, Maha's Fine Egyptian Cuisine restaurant opened on the Danforth. It is the first to offer Foule as a main dish in the Egyptian tradition. However, the foule bowl is over-laid with sunny-side up eggs and falafel and accompanied by seasoned bread and sauces, to exoticize, sensationalize, and enrich the presentation for Toronto's non-Arab patrons.
7. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary edition (New York: Vintage, 2003).

PART III.

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**NATIVISM AND EXCLUSION**

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## CHAPTER 11.

# WHITE SUPREMACY, POLITICAL VIOLENCE, AND COMMUNITY, 1907 AND 2017

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LAURA ISHIGURO AND LAURA MADOKORO

We write in September 2017, in the wake of white supremacist rallies across North America, from Charlottesville to Quebec City. On each occasion, anti-fascist and anti-racist activists, along with other community members, confronted these rallies with large and diverse counter-demonstrations, largely shutting them down, overwhelming them, or rendering them caricatures of their original plans. On 19 August, Vancouver was the site of one such confrontation. A planned anti-Islam rally at Vancouver's City Hall mostly failed to materialize alongside a counter-protest of approximately 4000 people, organized by an ad hoc group, Stand Up To Racism Metro Vancouver.

As historians of migration and settler colonialism, we are reminded that these events – often represented as exceptional, new, or surprising – highlight much wider and older tensions in Canada. In particular, as we consider the recent events and their political stakes in Vancouver, we are struck by their resonance with something that happened in the city exactly 110 years ago today.



*Building damaged during Vancouver riot of 1907 - 130 Powell Street. UBC Archives, JCPC\_36\_017.*

On Saturday 7 September 1907, Vancouver was gripped by one of the largest race riots in Canadian history. This event started with a large gathering of people who also marched on City Hall, in that case behind a banner that said: “Stand for a White Canada.”<sup>1</sup> After listening to fiery speeches against Asian immigration, a significant number then headed to Chinese and Japanese neighbourhoods in the city, where they wreaked extensive property damage, physical violence, and terror.

In thinking about the recent Stand Up To Racism event alongside the 1907 parade and riot, we could tell a story about how much has changed in a city now willing to turn out in numbers to drown out calls for a “White Canada.” But we could equally tell a story about how little has changed in a settler colonial city still organized around inequality and rage, including ongoing anti-Asian racism. Both of these arguments would be important and well supported with evidence, but here we want to reflect on a different issue. What questions does the 1907 event raise for us, and how do these relate to the questions we might ask—or more pointedly, often fail to ask—of the present?



## Vancouver 1907

The 1907 Labour Day parade was organized by the Asiatic Exclusion League (AEL). Established in San Francisco in 1905, the League quickly established branches across the Pacific coast of North America. In Vancouver, the AEL was far from fringe, boasting members from a wide swath of society, including the mayor Alexander Bethune. Calling for the exclusion of Asian people from North America, the AEL was especially concerned about economic competition for white workers (blaming Asian workers for the low wages they were paid) and fearful of the social and cultural impact of migration from China, Japan and India. At the heart of the AEL's arguments was the shared conviction that Canada should be a "white" country – a position that ignored Indigenous people and their sovereignty, and the existing diversity of non-Indigenous people, including Asian people who had been in and integral to what is now British Columbia for as long as white people had been.

Despite the AEL's arguments and some government efforts to restrict Asian migration (including a 1903 increase to the head tax on Chinese migrants), Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian people continued to move to Canada in the early twentieth century. It was in this context that the Vancouver AEL organized the 1907 parade. On the day, five thousand people marched from the Cambie Street Grounds to City Hall on Westminster Avenue (now Main Street), weaving its way through the largely Japanese and Chinese neighbourhoods on the way. Another two thousand joined at City Hall where the crowd listened to speakers demanding a ban on Asian migration. The mood was defiant. They sang "Rule Britannia" and the "Maple Leaf Forever," then burned an effigy of Lieutenant Governor James Dunsmuir, who had recently prevented efforts by the BC legislature to pass further anti-Asian legislation.

Then, approximately six or seven hundred people marched again through the nearby Chinese and Japanese neighbourhoods. There, the crowd started to throw rocks through windows. One resident of Chinatown later recalled:

We lived in Shanghai Alley... One store had lights on, and all the glass there was shattered. Papa came back and said, 'Don't put on the lights!

And don't sit near the windows!' They were running through all the lanes, making all kinds of noise. We had no lights on, so they couldn't see us. We sat in the centre, so that if anything happened at either end, we could still run out.<sup>2</sup>

The violence was swift. Some reports indicate that the crowd was in Chinatown for only five minutes before moving to Powell Street, home to the city's growing Japanese community. Here the destruction escalated: property damages were estimated at \$1553.58 with an extra \$7842.42 in collateral damages.<sup>3</sup> The crowd's rage was not uncontrolled, but rather clearly targeted Asian residents. At the end of the night, windows in every Japanese and Chinese-run store in the area had been smashed, while *Victoria's Daily Colonist* noted "those of white people living adjacent or among them were left untouched."<sup>4</sup>

While the police made some arrests, it ultimately took the community's self-defence to stem the violence. Hearing the damage in nearby Chinatown, Japanese and Chinese residents met the rioters on Powell Street armed with whatever they could find, from sticks to broken glass. According to the *Daily Province*, they

poured forth into the streets as soon as the limit of their patience had been reached... Many of the Japanese went to the ground as stones thumped against their heads, but the insensible ones were carried off by friends, and the fight kept up till the mob wavered, broke and finally retreated.<sup>5</sup>

This stopped the majority of violence, but sporadic attacks continued for two more days. Japanese and Chinese people closed their stores and held back their labour while the attacks continued, instead holding mass meetings and patrolling their neighbourhoods. The impromptu strike meant that local sawmills and about a third of Vancouver's restaurants closed.<sup>6</sup> On Monday, community members put out a fire at the Japanese Primary School. Then, finally, the weekend's wave of overt violence abated.<sup>7</sup>

In the days that followed, Canadian politicians and the media decried what has been labelled a riot. On 10 September, the *Daily Colonist's* top headline proclaimed: "Vancouver hoodlums disgrace their city." Later in the issue, the editors clarified their position: they

too were in favour of Asian exclusion, but property damage and violence in the streets were the wrong approach.<sup>8</sup> Politicians, labour leaders, and other journalists made similar cases. For them, the riot was an unrespectable and ineffective way to show support for Asian exclusion, when compared to their primary tactics of parades, speeches, and policies. In other words, they were not concerned with the arguments, ideas, or emotions that drove the riot, but rather with the optics of mass violence.

This position became even clearer in the aftermath. Primarily concerned about the diplomatic implications of the riot, Prime Minister Laurier dispatched a young Mackenzie King to assess and address the damages.<sup>9</sup> In King's view, the roots of the riot—and the general unrest on the coast—lay with Asian migration. In this, he echoed many white Canadians who also blamed the violence on the migrants rather than the rioters. King's recommendations led to the 1907 Gentleman's Agreement between Canada and Japan, which limited migration to 400 men per year. This was not the total exclusion that the AEL demanded, but was still a significant restriction that specifically targeted Japanese people.

King's conviction that Canada should be a country for white people lingered long after the riot. Forty years later, he would declare in the House of Commons:

The people of Canada do not wish as a result of mass immigration to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population. Large scale immigration from the Orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population.<sup>10</sup>

Overall, the riot and the federal government's response, exemplified by Mackenzie King's extended period in office, reveal the extent to which white supremacy was not only tolerated, but actually embedded in the mindsets of politicians and many other Canadians. While the government and media decried the violence, the longer-term result was an entrenching of the state's commitment to white supremacy and the escalated exclusion of Asian people through new immigration controls.

## Reflections

While many discussions of recent white supremacist events have focused on their historical parallels to Nazi Germany or the United States, the 1907 parade and riot serve as one reminder of the long local and national history of white supremacy in Canada too. Anti-immigrant racism and violence have been integral to white supremacist visions of a “white Canada” for well over a century, whether taking the form of government policies, mass gatherings at city halls, or violence in the streets.

At the same time, the events of 1907 remind us of the importance of community action, memory, and education work. For too long, instead of thinking about the riot as central to Canada’s character, and the product of racial attitudes that imbued its governance at all levels, the events of 1907 were treated as an isolated incident, if thought about at all. But memories of the riot have endured powerfully within the Japanese, Chinese and South Asian communities in Vancouver. In 2007, a coalition of educators and community members staged an “Anniversaries of Change” event to mark the centennial of the 1907 riot, as well as the 1947 end of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the 1967 introduction of the universal immigration points system, and the 1997 handover of Hong Kong. The project involved curriculum development as well as a walk through the downtown core, which traced the 1907 events and acknowledged these other developments that have had a powerful impact on Asian communities in Canada. In a moment when commemoration is being hotly contested in the United States and Canada, from statues of Robert E. Lee to schools bearing the name of John A. Macdonald, it bears thinking about who does the work of remembering and commemorating histories that mainstream society would rather forget.

And finally, the 1907 parade and riot invite other questions that resonate today too. For instance, who is seen as violent and why? What gets called violence? What is seen as restoring order, and which order is that? There are no single answers to such questions. But by asking them, the events of the past offer an invitation to re-think critical issues that remain too-often unasked of the present.

## Notes

1. John Price, "'Orienting' the Empire: Mackenzie King and the Aftermath of the 1907 Race Riots," *BC Studies* 156/157 (2007), 59.
2. Lillian Ho Wong in Paul Yee, *Saltwater City: An Illustrated History of the Chinese in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2006), 28.
3. The Bank of Canada's Inflation Calculator only calculates historical inflation between 1914 and 2017. However, to provide a rough translation of these damages to today's Canadian dollar, we used the 1914 rates; with those, the costs of the riot would be equivalent to approximately \$34 336.75 and \$173 330.77 today.
4. *Daily Colonist*, 10 September 1907.
5. *Daily Province*, 9 September 1907.
6. *Daily Colonist*, 10 September 1907.
7. For more on the parade and riot, see Price, "'Orienting' the Empire"; Erika Lee, "Hemispheric Orientalism and the 1907 Pacific Coast Race Riots," *Amerasia Journal* 33, 2 (2007): 19-48; and Julie Gilmour, "Interpreting Social Disorder: The Case of the 1907 Vancouver Riots," *International journal* 67, 2 (2012): 483-495.
8. *Daily Colonist*, 10 September 1907.
9. For details on the events in Vancouver in 1907 and their impact on Mackenzie King's career, see Julie Gilmour *Trouble on Main Street: Mackenzie King, Reason, Race, and the 1907 Vancouver Riots* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2014).
10. Mackenzie King, *House of Commons Debates*, 1 May 1947.

## CHAPTER 12.

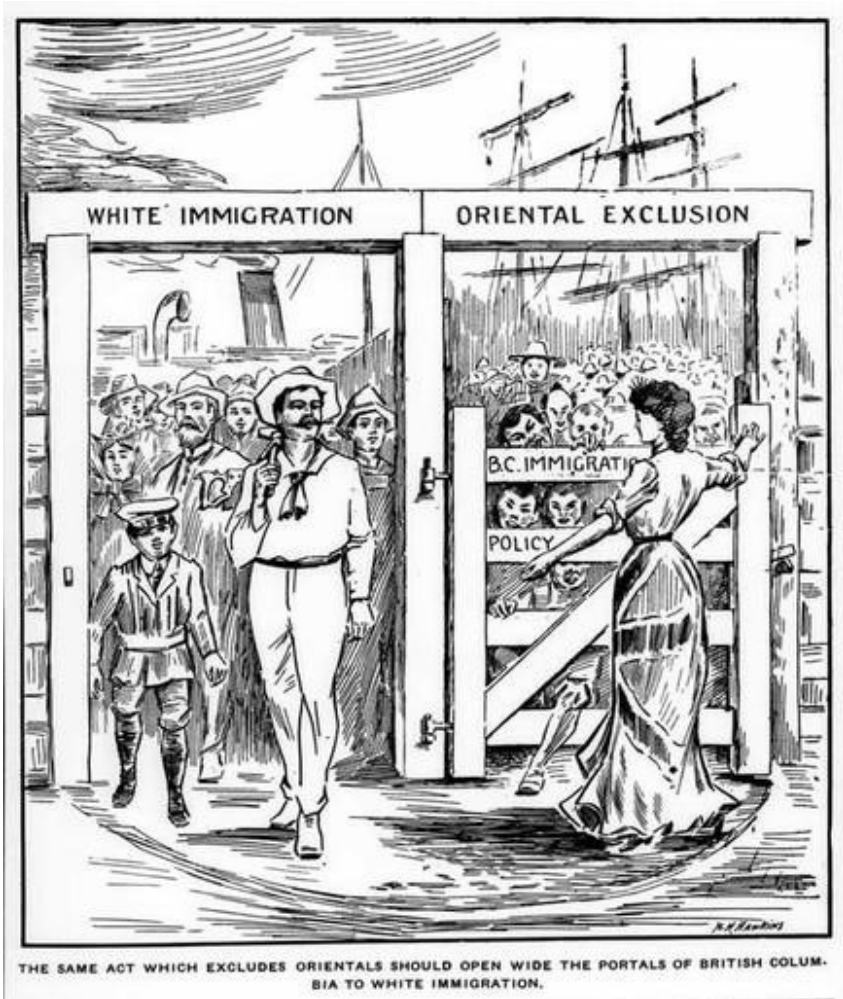
# IMMIGRATION AND WHITE SUPREMACY: PAST AND PRESENT

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DAVID ATKINSON

Nativism continues to hide in plain sight in Canada. Martin Collacott's June 2017 editorial on immigration in the *Vancouver Sun* resuscitates the same xenophobic ideas that animated white supremacists in British Columbia a century ago.<sup>1</sup> While he conceals the source of his anxiety with terms like "visible minorities" and "newcomers," his arguments represent a thinly veiled invocation of "Yellow Peril" rhetoric that was commonplace in the province during the early twentieth century. Like many contemporary critics of immigration in both North America and Europe, Collacott tries to disguise these antiquated racial ideas with euphemisms and expressions of socio-economic anxiety, but the fact remains; this is old wine in an old bottle.

Previous advocates of a "White Canada" regularly deployed the same arguments in their efforts to restrict Asian and other non-white immigration. For example, Collacott's core contention that Canada will become the first country to "voluntarily allow its population to be largely replaced by people from elsewhere" was a constant refrain of the anti-Asian exclusion movement in British Columbia (and elsewhere) during the early twentieth century.



*The Gatekeepers, circa 1907. Saturday Sunset (Vancouver), 24 August 1907.*

Prominent lawyer Charles Wilson K.C. expressed the same idea when testifying before the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration on behalf of the province in 1902. Decrying the supposed flood of Asian immigrants to B.C., Wilson implored the commissioners to

preserve one of the fairest portions of the earth's surface for the Canadian people, and not allow it to be wrested from them, not by conquest, but simply by engulfing us in the rising tide of oriental immigration.

This widespread fear of impending white elimination was driven partly by apprehensions about the province's geographical proximity to Asia, and partly by its isolation from other Canadian population centres. However, it was the irrational fear of an overwhelming Asian influx that truly chilled the blood of provincial exclusionists. As Vancouver City M.P. Herbert Henry Stevens warned during a public demonstration against the disembarkation of South Asian passengers from the *Komagata Maru* in June 1914, "at our doors there are 800 millions of Asiatics....the very least tremor from that source would unquestionably swamp us by weight of numbers."

As Collacott's editorial suggests, this fear of racial replacement is not simply a historical curiosity. Contemporary white supremacists are especially enamored of this notion of white "erasure"—or "white genocide." Derived in part from the writings of convicted murderer David Lane, it has become one of the central messages of the so-called alt-right, which traffics in simplistic meme-driven distortions of history, ethnicity, and identity. Advocates of this concept variously denounce an international Jewish conspiracy or some blend of liberal social policies (abortion, LGBTQ rights, immigration, and miscegenation) as responsible for their plight. Whatever the source, multiculturalism and anti-racism are viewed by right wing militants as code words for a deliberate policy of white elimination.

Collacott also adopts the disingenuous tactics of the alt-right when he questions the commitment of Vancouver's immigrants to Canadian moral and ethical standards. These unidentified individuals "will bring with them values and traditions that may differ in key respects from those of most Canadians," he contends. Collacott highlights liberal notions of "gender equality and concern for protection of the environment" as principles that his anonymous immigrants would find unworthy of safeguard. This ostensible concern for the sanctity of liberal values is a tactic often used by alt-right activists to dissimulate their actual intent. Take for example the recent spate of "Anti-Sharia Law" protests across the United States, which featured a variety of anti-Islamic protestors voicing their concern for women's rights, or Richard Spencer's embrace of diversity to justify white nationalism and racial segregation.

Collacott also echoes his predecessors and the modern alt-right



in blaming an assortment of faceless bureaucrats, developers, multiculturalists, and immigration activists for this impending disaster. Charles Wilson would have cheered this diagnosis in 1902. As he testified before the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, Asian immigration was encouraged by greedy industrialists, financiers, and merchants who profited from low wages and stimulated demand for land and goods. "Are we then to allow this land to become the home of a servile, alien race," Wilson asked, "their superintendents paying tribute to non-resident capitalists and a few tradesmen who supply the wants of both?"

In reality, Collacott nostalgically yearns for an imagined homogeneous past that only ever existed in the minds of the province's most obstinate white supremacists. His admonition regarding white population replacement emulates precisely the words of British Columbia's one-time Minister of Finance and Agriculture, Francis Carter-Cotton. In the midst of a concerted provincial campaign to force the federal and imperial governments' hand on Asian exclusion in 1899, Carter-Cotton defended the idea that British Columbia "should be occupied by a large and thoroughly British population rather than by one in which the number of aliens largely predominated and many of the distinctive features of a settled British community were lacking." Only by commanding and consuming the rich resources of the Pacific coast could white civilization prosper in British Columbia, Carter-Cotton avowed.

Collacott claims that his angst is rooted in social, economic, cultural, and political concerns, not racial ones. Herbert Stevens made a similar claim at Vancouver's Dominion Hall while rallying Vancouver's white residents against Asian immigrants in 1914. Much like Collacott, Stevens insisted that defending the whiteness of British Columbia "is not a case of racial pride. It is a case of actual social and economic conditions in our country which it is impossible to maintain with two systems of living in our country which cannot be successfully assimilated." Nevertheless, that evasion could not even withstand his next utterance: "I intend to stand absolutely on all occasions on this one great principle of a white country and a white British Columbia."

In reality, Collacott's commentary plainly reiterates the argu-

ments espoused by previous champions of white supremacy. They too essentialized Asian immigrants as hyper-competitive and economically rapacious interlopers, or as culturally alien intruders. Those ideas rested then—as now—on fundamentally racist notions of immutable racial characteristics that preclude assimilation and spell only disaster for Canada. Whether couched in a century-old language of civilizational decline, racial degeneration, and economic competition, or camouflaged in the alt-right’s semantic contortions of white nationalism, “race realism,” and identitarianism, these are profoundly dangerous ideas that undermine the very foundation of modern Canadian society.

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#### Notes

1. Martin Collacott, “Opinion: Canada replacing its population a case of wilful ignorance, greed, excess political correctness,” *Vancouver Sun*, June 5, 2017.

## CHAPTER 13.

# PORK CUTS: THE SHARP EDGES OF NATIVISM IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

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AITANA GUIA

Too many political leaders are banking on politicizing migration today. Culture has become a fertile battlefield. Food represents familiarity and safety. Eating is a daily activity that connects parents to their children, to their schools, and to their extended families. Social life in Southern Europe revolves around food and food rituals. Donna Gabbacia, a historian of the American immigrant experience, explains that the “choices people make about eating are rarely trivial or accidental. Food is a central concern of human beings in all times and in all places.”<sup>1</sup>

Marine Le Pen’s Front National (FN) knows it.

### Unsavoury School Meals

In 2015, the FN mayors of the south-western town of Arveyres and the Burgundy town of Chalon-sur-Saône ruled to eliminate the so-called “substitute meals” for students with religious dietary restrictions. In practice, that meant eliminating the no-pork options from the menu. “Pork or nothing,” a Muslim French nurse and mother was told by her City Hall just outside of Paris.

While these measures are justified as a strict defence of secularism, a way to fight “le communautarisme,” or as a cost-cutting mea-

sure, the French Socialist government has condemned these moves for “taking Muslim children hostage.”

France is a European exception in trying to accommodate the religious dietary restrictions of Muslim children. Some cities in the United Kingdom offer halal menus to children and Spanish schools offer no-pork or vegetarian options. Neither of these measures is uncontroversial. In the United Kingdom and Denmark, some animal right supporters oppose Muslim and Jewish ritual slaughter practices as inhumane.

In Spain in late 2014, dozens of Muslim parents removed their school children from the school canteen in the Valencian town of Alzira. They demanded a halal menu for their children. No-pork and vegetarian menus, which they had been guaranteed for the previous 9 years and are also offered to Muslims in prisons and hospitals throughout Spain, were no longer enough. The school, city, and regional administrations argued that nowhere in Spain are halal menus offered to Muslims in the care of state institutions, and that no-pork or vegetarian menus already guarantee the rights Muslims were given in the State-Islamic Commission of Spain Agreement signed in 1992.

Mariachiara Giorda, professor of the history of religions at Milano Bicocca, and her project Benvenuti in Italia wanted to solve food controversies by designing a “universal menu” that could accommodate most dietary restrictions of religious minorities in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

“Eating together has a long history of symbolizing peaceful acceptance among peoples of differing cultures,” Donna Gabbaccia reminds us. Jean-Paul Beneytou, the mayor of Chilly-Mazarin—representing Nicolas Sarkozy’s right wing Les Républicains party—conveniently followed the lead of the FN and eliminated the no-pork menu from schools. Beneytou argued that “it is important that everyone be served ‘the same’ food.”<sup>3</sup> Rather than thinking of a universal menu, Beneytou insisted that “living together” requires eating pork. Devout Muslim parents are unlikely to acquiesce. The FN is thus indirectly promoting the establishment of private Islamic schools in France, a measure which has all the ingredients to become a recipe for disaster.



*Ceiling display of Jamon Serrano and Jamon Iberico, Granada, Spain. Wikimedia Commons.*

### **Pork Supremacy**

Using pork to attack Muslims has been a staple of European radical right parties. The Italian Northern League and the Flemish Vlaams Belang have eaten pork in public in contested places, for instance on the site of a planned mosque, to signal that Europeans must eat pork. Pig heads, pig urine, bacon slices, and live pigs have been used against mosques in Europe.<sup>4</sup>

What is this? “Gastronomic racism,” “Gastronationalism,”<sup>5</sup> “Culinary xenophobia”? Perhaps “pork supremacy” is more appropriate – and it’s nothing new in Europe.

The flavours of frying lard and pork stew were equated with Christianity in medieval times. European inquisitorial bodies used the eating of pork as a sign of true conversion to Christianity on the part of Jews and Muslims. For Christian conquerors in the Iberian Peninsula, the smell of frying with olive oil, encountered in the Southern province of Andalusia, indicated false conversion.

Cooking with pork and displaying salami or jamón (cured pork meat) was a safe strategy for new converts to demonstrate their true

allegiance and avoid encounters with the Inquisition. Today, displaying jamón is still a national sport in Spain. Pork was an enticement to, and a sign of, true conversion. “Lard and jamón converted more Jews to Christianity than did the Inquisition” [Más judíos hizo cristianos el tocino y el jamón que la Santa Inquisición].

Today, the protagonists of Somali-Italian Igiaba Scego’s short story “Salsicce”, or the Catalan-Amazig Najat El Hachmi’s *The Last Patriarch*, feel the pressure to eat pork in order to prove their sense of belonging in Italy and Spain to their co-workers and neighbors.

### Local Food First

In 2010, the Italian Northern League launched the campaign “Sì alla polenta, no al couscous” (We want Polenta, not Cous Cous) in order to “protect local specialities from the growing popularity of ethnic cuisine,” argued Luca Zaia, Lega Nord Minister of Agriculture from 2008 to 2010.<sup>6</sup>

According to Gabbaccia, food “provides arenas where particularly rapid cultural accommodations between natives and newcomers can occur.”<sup>7</sup> The Lega Nord was thus trying to prevent natural fusion and mixing.

The Lega Nord promoted a series of local bans on foreign food. In the small town of Citadella, Treviso, it succeeded in banning Kebab stores from the walled city centre; in Trieste, curry chicken, kebab, or cous-cous has, by law, to be sold together with northern specialties like polenta or musetto. Compare these with the kebab frenzy that has taken place in Berlin, where “the city is over the döner. The variety of Mid-Eastern meat sandwich in the capital is now basically infinite.”<sup>8</sup>

A growing appreciation of food among those who distrust genetically modified foods and large agribusiness, and who want instead to support local food and the 100-mile diet, is also fuelling local and regional pride, which can easily be used by nativists against “foreign cultures”. Unless, of course, locavores and pro-diversity agents find common ground. Visual artist Leone Contini is questioning the dichotomies local/global, native/foreign in his TuscanChinese project.

## The Mediterranean Diet

Mediterranean culinary traditions are, however, much larger than pork. There is plenty to choose without the need to exclude gastronomic minorities. Mohammed Chaib, former member of the Catalan parliament, proposed using the Spanish omelette, a popular dish made with egg, onion and potatoes, as a national symbol that could unite all but vegan Spaniards. The other contender as a national food, the controversial jamón, would of course exclude all non-pork eaters and environmentally minded omnivores.

In the Tuscan tradition, at least half of the regional specialties to try when visiting Florence are pork free and many of them would even entice vegans. Bistecca alla fiorentina (steak), lampredotto (cow's stomach stew), crostini toscani (chicken liver on toasted bread) are good for all omnivores, as long as animals have been slaughtered following ritual practices. Lard from Colonnata is only for real pork lovers, while panzanella (bread salad), ribollita (bean and vegetable stew), and pappa al pomodoro (bread with tomato sauce) are universal dishes. Would it be un-Tuscan to serve universal dishes at schools and leave pork for the private sphere?

In 2015, the World Health Organization made waves in Spain after suggesting that red and processed meat were linked to cancer. Jamón lovers took print and online fora by storm and confirmed their commitment to meat, claiming jamón as if it were a human right. We've lost the memory of it being a privilege and a rare treat merely three generations ago. Today it is a daily staple in most Spanish households.

Meat, however, is a luxury item with high environmental costs. By thinking of pork not only as a right, but also an obligation to be consumed by minorities in Europe, we are deepening the environmental and health challenges we currently face. If we were to return to the days when we mostly followed a Mediterranean diet, with pork and meat as indulgences for rare occasions, Europe would become a more inclusive society for vegans, vegetarians, and non-pork eaters without being any less European for it.

## Notes

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## CHAPTER 14.

# X-RAYS AND THE DISCRIMINATORY SCIENCE OF MIGRATION

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LAURA MADOKORO

The postwar era is often celebrated as a great time of liberalization in Canada, as far as immigration rules are concerned. What is often ignored is how hard people, including Chinese Canadians, fought to obtain equality of treatment, and how the federal government was incredibly reluctant to proceed with large-scale change until the 1960s. Indeed, under the guise of reforms, the government began to rely on science and technology to limit migration from China, even as it brought an end to the exclusion era.

When the *Chinese Immigration Act* (which had excluded almost all migrants from China after 1923) was repealed in 1947, optimism soared among Chinese communities that they might be able to sponsor their families to Canada. This optimism was misplaced. Progress in reforming discriminatory legislation was slow. Equality in family sponsorship legislation was achieved only in 1967. Even worse, as immigration legislation gradually became more race-neutral, authorities looked to other mechanisms, including science and technology, to restrict the movement of people. In the 1950s, the federal government transformed regulations relating to medical admissibility from their initial purpose of excluding and quaranti-

ning particular contagions to regulations that could be used to verify and identify the claimed authenticity of family class migrants.

Regulations passed after 1947 limited the sponsorship of children for Chinese Canadians to those under the age of twenty-one (it was twenty-five for other groups). Immigration officials defended this limitation on operational grounds, pointing to the difficulty of verifying claimed relationships given the ongoing civil war in China. The Chinese community waged fierce campaigns for reform, and in 1951 the government agreed to raise the sponsorship limit to twenty-five “on humanitarian grounds,” given the unsettled conditions in the newly established People’s Republic of China.<sup>1</sup> The decision to make a limited concession in terms of the age-limits followed the introduction of x-ray requirements in 1950 for all migrants to Canada. In theory, the requirements for x-rays applied universally, but Chinese migrants were especially affected by this new screening procedure.

The x-ray requirements introduced in China went above and beyond the tests required to secure medical admissibility to Canada. At first, x-rays were used to screen for certain diseases considered endemic to China. These included infestations of “different types of intestinal parasites, chiefly, hookworms, whipworms and roundworms.”<sup>2</sup> Canadian officials noted that these “conditions are quite common in China and are often considered as insignificant.” They believed that as long as the conditions were treated prior to arrival in Canada, there would be no major medical risk. As such, testing for and treating diseases was rather straightforward. However, with the debate over the appropriate age of admissions, immigration officials realized that x-rays could be used to verify the claims for admissibility. Medical experts from the Canadian Immigration Office in Hong Kong informed the government that x-rays were of “real help in establishing age between 8 and 21 years” because bone structures varied with age in six regions: the shoulder (including the whole cavicle), the elbow, wrist, the pelvis and hip joint, the knee joint and the ankle joint.<sup>3</sup> Armed with this knowledge, the government hoped that x-rays could help verify the age of individuals for advanced sponsorship. X-rays subsequently took on a whole new purpose in the context of migration from China.

In practice, x-ray readings were hardly scientific, despite claims to that effect. Dr. H.D. Reid, chief of the Division of Quarantine, Immigration Medical and Sick Mariners' Services explained that his staff were "fully aware of the limitations (on radiology) and, in order that no injustice be done, have always erred on the safe side in expressing an opinion."<sup>4</sup> Dr. Reid's caution did not reassure officials who were already suspicious of the Chinese character. Decades of exclusion had caused Chinese migrants to assume false identities, using fake papers to establish themselves in Canada. The so-called "paper son" phenomenon cast a long shadow. Allegations of potential corruption triggered immediate concern. As a result, a development in the summer of 1952 contributed to the demise of the x-ray examination for the purposes of determining the age of potential migrants. In mid-June, the District Superintendent in Hong Kong reported that the visa office was experiencing an "increase in the number of x-ray plates received from individuals of Chinese race in Canada with requests that previous applications rejected for alleged dependents be reconsidered."<sup>5</sup> He reported that one doctor in particular, a graduate from the University of Manitoba, seemed to "be developing quite a little business" in providing "alternative x-rays."<sup>6</sup>

This event intersected with growing suspicions of the process in Hong Kong, prompting officials in Ottawa to return many cases for reassessment. At one point, 50% of cases reviewed were being returned to Hong Kong. Officers there reported to be "in a state approaching frustration."<sup>7</sup> The science of x-rays proved to be an imperfect one. In the end, officials in Ottawa gave weight to the visa officer in Hong Kong who, as one official noted, "is in a much better position to deal intelligently with the case, than we in Ottawa."<sup>8</sup> It was a vote for human interpretation over scientific assessment and one that revealed the limitations of science as an accurate tool for exclusion, though one that rhetorically, and administratively, may have served its purpose. Ultimately, the fallibility of x-rays meant that they were replaced with still other technologies, including blood testing. These too perpetuated the exclusionary nature of modern immigration regimes and profoundly shaped the aspirations of Chinese migrants and their families.

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## Notes

1. Memo from Laval Fortier to the Minister, July 27, 1955, RG 26, Volume 125, File 3-33-7, Part 2, Chinese Immigration, 1936-1949, LAC.
2. H.D. Reid to Director, Immigration Branch, 13 December 1951, RG 76, Volume 796, File 546-1-526, Part 1, LAC.
3. Drs. Anderson & Partners to The Superintendent, Canadian Immigration Office, 4 September 1950, RG 76, Volume 796, File 546-1-526, Part 1, LAC.
4. H.D. Reid, Chief, Division of Quarantine, Immigration Medical and Sick Mariners' Services to P.T. Baldwin, Chief, Admission Division, Immigration Branch, 1 June 1951, RG 76, Volume 796, File 546-1-526, Part 1, LAC.
5. District Superintendent to Director, Ottawa, 13 May 1952, RG 76, Volume 796, File 546-1-526, Part 1, LAC.
6. Director to District Superintendent, 16 June 1952, RG 76, Volume 796, File 546-1-526, Part 1, LAC.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 15.

### **BABA WORE A BURQA, AND NONA WORE A NIQAB**

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FRANCA IACOVETTA AND KAREN DUBINSKY

Last week, two high-profile Canadian Muslim women, writer Sheema Khan and Zunera Ishaq (the woman at the centre of the niqab controversy), publicly questioned the safety of Muslims in this country. Khan lived here in the aftermath of 9/11; she says it's worse now in 2015.<sup>1</sup> These admissions amount to a tragic statement about the use of the niqab as an election issue. Yet as Canadian women's historians, we have heard it before. Intolerant Canadians, from political elites to ordinary citizens, have long attempted to impose their notions of what it means to be a Canadian on the bodies of immigrant women. Today's veiled Muslim woman joins a long line of immigrant women whom this country has feared or pitied, but always stereotyped, for at least a century.

Consider those Doukhobor women harnessed to a plough, breaking the tough Prairie. Their photos, faces almost hidden by their babushkas, have graced Canadian history textbooks for decades. The widely shared image—reproduced as a postcard inviting everyone to get a look—struck many Canadians as the personification of a backward European peasant culture that treated its women like downtrodden beasts of burden. These women posed a striking contrast to the prevailing middle-class ideal of the Victorian woman,

that morally superior angel in the home. Consider too the distinctive dress of the women who completed the portrait of Immigration Minister Clifford Sifton's ideal Eastern European peasant "in a sheepskin coat" with "a stout wife and a half-dozen children" grudgingly welcomed to Canada. Someone needed to do the backbreaking labour to settle what was portrayed as an empty Prairie, the original First Nations inhabitants having been relegated to reserves. Even Icelandic pioneer women, easily assimilated, one might expect, into the Nordic race, were castigated for their typical headdress: a dark knitted skullcap with tassel. Such women may now be considered Old Stock Canadians, but not so long ago, their Anglo neighbours viewed them as second-class. According to historian Sarah Carter, Anglo women's organization in Alberta thought Ukrainian girls so deficient in the standards of proper womanhood that they too should be sent to residential schools.



*Doukhobor women, Thunder Hill Colony, Manitoba (ca. 1899). Library and Archives Canada, C-000681.*

Then, too, there are the Jewish, Italian, Polish, Hungarian and other women who settled in Canada's cities. Crowded into slum housing,

these women were reduced to static folk-figures who enacted strange religious rituals and stunk up their neighbourhood with fermenting cabbage. Social workers investigated these “underworlds” and ridiculed the mamas who pushed and shoved and haggled at markets in a most unwomanly manner. Italian women, viewed by reformers as unschooled, oppressed, and shadowed by black kerchiefs, were deemed the least likely of all to adjust to Canadian life.

What is it about the women-folk that make people so anxious? Women rarely run countries but they certainly symbolize the nation. Immigrant women preserve the culture of the group. They cook the food and raise the children and pass on the language. Often they dress distinctively. They stand out.

Born of fear, stereotypes obscure more than they reveal. The Baba on the homestead ploughed while the men worked on the railroads or in the mines. Italian women entered the labour force in large numbers, their paycheques compensating their husbands’ seasonal unemployment. Today’s headscarfed refugee woman might be a teacher, a nurse, or a community organizer.

Of course immigrant men have not always been warmly welcomed in this country. Canadian immigration history is full of examples of discrimination: the Chinese Head Tax, Sikh men forbidden to disembark in Vancouver’s harbour, Black men refused entry by a variety of barriers. The demonization of Muslims also has long roots and it has taken its own course in Canada.

Yet generations of immigrant women have experienced a particular form of racism: a mix of charity and contempt. Very Canadian. In the niqab controversy we see cynical electioneering but also the remnants of some old anxieties about the nonas, babas and omas of previous generations. Just as there have always been scapegoats, susceptible to the political manipulations of the day, there has also been an audience, willing to believe the worst.

Now a Canadian citizen, Zunera Ishaq has refused to let Prime Minister Stephen Harper speak on her behalf. This also illustrates another familiar historical pattern: immigrant women have rarely been silent in the face of discrimination.

## Notes

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